WE TOOK TO THE WOODS



Louise Dickinson Rich

POCKET BOOKS, INC., ROCKEFELLER CENTER, NEW YORK

Louise Dickinson Rich's first child, Rufus, was born in the wilderness with no one to help but her husband. This episode in Mrs. Rich's fine book was among those singled out by reviewers for particular praise. See page 111

GENUINE POCKET BOOK...





To My Boys

RALPH • GERRISH • RUFUS

KYAK • TOM

This Book is Dedicated



CONTENTS

"Why Don't You Write a Book?"

"But How Do You Make a Living?"

"But You Don't Live Here All the Year 'Round?"

"Isn't Housekeeping Difficult?"

"Aren't the Children a Problem?"

I *"What Do You Do With All Your Spare Time?"*

"Don't You Ever Get Bored?"

"Aren't You Ever Frightened?"

x *"Don't You Get Awfully Out of Touch?"*

x *"Do You Get Out Very Often?"*

"Is It Worth-while?"

these before going to bed, I don't have to climb into a mackinaw and gum-boots as I do in winter, and cross a clearing in the cold to get them. And most of all I like it because I like to go upstairs to bed, instead of into the next room. For these reasons, we always put off moving out of it in the fall until the last possible moment, and we are rebuilding it so we can live in it all the year. Since Ralph is doing the work himself, for economic reasons, this is a slow process. At the moment the whole structure is balanced precariously on poles over the cellar he has dug beneath it. It looks both dangerous and sloppy, but he says it's perfectly safe, and when you're in a house, its external appearance needn't bother you. In fact, I should think a good way to buy a house would be by the looks of the house across the street, which is the one you see most of.

The house across the street here is the Guide's House, or what would be the servants' quarters, if we had servants. It's called the Guide's House because most people living in a place like this would be summer people, and they would employ a registered guide who would live in the house across the road. It's a nice little shack, with a living-room and two bedrooms, and Gerrish lives there.

Gerrish works for us, but he is in no sense a servant. He has a guide's license, but that isn't important, because so have Ralph and I. It's a handy thing to own, around here. What Gerrish is, I suppose, is the hired help. We pay him to do certain things, which is the hired part. But since he is practically a member of the family, he does a great many other things for which we don't, and couldn't, pay him. That's the help part. We couldn't ever pay him, for example, for being so good and patient with our four-year-old Rufus, who, not to mince words, is often a pest, unmotherly an observation as that may be. Gerrish has to take his pay for that out of Rufus' adoration of him. We couldn't pay him, either, for being so dependable, and for

space behind it can be used as a woodbox. Ralph, known in these parts as "an ingenious cuss," cut a hole in the house, fitted it with a beveled door like an ice-chest door, and now we can put the wood in from outdoors. This doesn't sound like much of a triumph, but it is, nevertheless. Nothing will cool a house off quicker than opening and closing the front door forty times, while arm-loads of wood are brought in; and nothing will enrage and discourage the housewife more surely than the pecks of dirt and snow inevitably tracked onto her clean-swept floor. This little woodbox door, therefore, contributes largely to the peace and comfort of the Rich menage.

Why don't we just burn the Winter House down and forget about it? Because it's the only house that can be heated in really cold weather. Ralph has insulated it properly and finished the inside with really beautiful hand-rubbed pine paneling, and in spite of all I have said against it, it's not half bad, actually. It hasn't any kitchen, either, which is a point in its favor, odd as that may sound. We use the kitchen ell of the Big House all the year round, so the cooking odors that always collect in small country houses in the winter, no matter how often they are aired, never get into the Winter House.

About the last of May, or as soon as it is warm enough we move down into the Big House, and the Winter House becomes the guest house for the summer. The Big House was built at a later date for a summer camp, and that is all it is good for in its present state. It is big and airy and the walls are too thin for warmth and it sprawls all over the place. I like it because it is on a high bluff over the river, with a view and sun-light and space to spread out in; because it has a huge stone fire-place that will take four-foot logs and really heat the living-room in the wettest, coldest September rain storm; because there is a wide porch over the river; because if I decide to eat some crackers and

these before going to bed, I don't have to climb into a mackinaw and gum-boots as I do in winter, and cross a clearing in the cold to get them. And most of all I like it because I like to go upstairs to bed, instead of into the next room. For these reasons, we always put off moving out of it in the fall until the last possible moment, and we are rebuilding it so we can live in it all the year. Since Ralph is doing the work himself, for economic reasons, this is a slow process. At the moment the whole structure is balanced precariously on poles over the cellar he has dug beneath it. It looks both dangerous and sloppy, but he says it's perfectly safe, and when you're in a house, its external appearance needn't bother you. In fact, I should think a good way to buy a house would be by the looks of the house across the street, which is the one you see most of.

The house across the street here is the Guide's House, or what would be the servants' quarters if we had servants. It's called the Guide's House because most people living in a place like this would be summer people, and they would employ a registered guide who would live in the house across the road. It's a nice little shack, with a living-room and two bedrooms, and Gerrish lives there.

Gerrish works for us, but he is in no sense a servant. He has a guide's license, but that isn't important, because so have Ralph and I. It's a handy thing to own, around here. What Gerrish is, I suppose, is the hired help. We pay him to do certain things, which is the hired part. But since he is practically a member of the family, he does a great many other things for which we don't, and couldn't, pay him. That's the help part. We couldn't ever pay him, for example, for being so good and patient with our four-year-old Rufus, who, not to mince words, is often a pest, unmotherly an observation as that may be. Gerrish has to take his pay for that out of Rufus' adoration of him. We couldn't pay him, either, for being so dependable, and for

always giving us a dollar and a quarter's worth of work of every dollar of his wages. We are very lucky to have found him. This is not a place that many people would care to work in. It is remote, not only from movies and stores, but from other people. There is nowhere to go except hunting and fishing, and nothing to see except woods and water. But luckily [illegible] likes it, and I think that he considers this [illegible] his own undisputed realm, as home. [illegible]

The one [illegible] that looks as though it belonged in the deep woods [illegible] cabin from long before [illegible] as it comes under the [illegible] of tools and pieces of [illegible] but which have [illegible] never

took it to pieces and put it together again, and now it runs the saw that saws our firewood.

We have only five miles of road to run a car on, but we are a four-car family. They aren't new models—the newest is a 1930 Model A and the oldest a 1924 Marmon—but they run, and they pay for themselves. All summer long Ralph hauls canoes and duffel across the carry for camping parties, and in the spring and fall the lumber company finds it convenient to hire him to tote their wangans up from Sunday Cove.

This lumber company is our privacy insurance, our guarantee that we won't wake up some morning and find new neighbors building a pink stucco bungalow down the river from us. With the exception of our two acres and a strip owned by a water power company, they own every foot of land for miles around. And they won't sell an inch to anybody. I won't go into reasons and company policy. All that matters is that, come hell or high water, they will not sell.

So here we sit in what amounts to a forest preserve of some hundreds of square miles, and in that "we" the reality differs again from the dream. I was going to live alone, remember. I don't, and that's quite all right with me. Besides Ralph, Rufus, and Gerrish, there is Sally, Ralph's sixteen-year-old daughter by a previous marriage, and further proof that I am a fool for luck. A step-daughter could be a thorn in the flesh, which Sally certainly isn't. And there are Kyak and Tom the dog and the cat.

We ourselves wouldn't have named Tom that, but we got him from a lumber camp that was moving out and didn't know what to do with him, so we had to take him as equipped. We compromise by saying that his full name is Thomas Bailey Aldrich, which isn't very suitable. He is the sort of cat that should be called Tom, regardless of banality. He is big and tough and mean, and he'd as soon

always giving us a dollar and a quarter's worth of work of every dollar of his wages. We are very lucky to have found him. This is not a place that many people would care to work in. It is remote, not only from movies and stores, but from other people. There is nowhere to go except hunting and fishing, and nothing to see except woods and water. But luckily Gerrish likes it, and I think that he considers that Guide's House, his own undisputed realm, as home. Perhaps that is pay of a kind.

The one building here that looks as though it belonged in the deep woods is Ralph's shop, an old log cabin from long before our day. I can't say much about it, as it comes under the heading of sacred ground. It is full of tools and pieces of board that look like any other boards, but which have something special about them so that they must never be touched or even looked at. Hanging from the rafters are old car parts, lengths of rope, chains and boat seats, all of which are going to be used some day for some important project. In the middle is a pile of invaluable junk, and around the edges are kegs of nails and bolts. In my bridal innocence I used, when I needed a nail, to go and take one out of a keg. But it always turned out that I had taken (a) the wrong kind of nail for the job on hand, and (b) a nail that was being conserved for [illegible] purpose and was practically irreplaceable. So [illegible] I need a nail I find Ralph and ask him to get me [illegible].

He's usually easy to find. I have only [illegible] for the sound of a motor running. He is [illegible] with gasoline motors and collects them [illegible] the most improbable places. Once he brought [illegible] old motor that someone had hauled into South [illegible] anchor and then abandoned. It had been under water all summer and frozen into the ice all winter, but he dragged it the seven miles home on a hand sled [illegible] over it

took it to pieces and put it together again, and now it runs the saw that saws our firewood.

We have only five miles of road to run a car on, but we are a four-car family. They aren't new models—the newest is a 1930 Model A and the oldest a 1924 Marmon—but they run, and they pay for themselves. All summer long Ralph hauls canoes and duffel across the carry for camping parties, and in the spring and fall the lumber company finds it convenient to hire him to tote their wangans up from Sunday Cove.

This lumber company is our privacy insurance, our guarantee that we won't wake up some morning and find new neighbors building a pink stucco bungalow down the river from us. With the exception of our two acres and a strip owned by a water power company, they own every foot of land for miles around. And they won't sell an inch to anybody. I won't go into reasons and company policy. All that matters is that, come hell or high water, they will not sell.

So here we sit in what amounts to a forest preserve of some hundreds of square miles, and in that "we" the reality differs again from the dream. I was going to live alone, remember. I don't, and that's quite all right with me.

Besides Ralph, Rufus, and Gerrish, there is Sally, Ralph's sixteen-year-old daughter by a previous marriage, and further proof that I am a fool for luck. A step-daughter could be a thorn in the flesh, which Sally certainly isn't. And there are Kyak and Tom, the dog and the cat.

We ourselves wouldn't have named Tom that, but we got him from a lumber camp that was moving out and didn't know what to do with him, so we had to take him as equipped. We compromise by saying that his full name is Thomas Bailey Aldrich, which isn't very suitable. He is the sort of cat that should be called Tom, regardless of banality. He is big and tough and mean, and he'd as soon

ansed only by loons, but in Boston or New York, or ...tte, Montana. It makes a difference. The Arm itself ...s not imposing, consisting of a huddle of ramshackle ...harfs and a string of tired sheds where people in here keep their Outside cars. But its implications are enormous.

Andover really is a town, with a school, two or three little stores, and a post office, whence comes our mail. Upton is a town, too, and our civic center, where we send Sally to school and where we go to vote. Most of the land around here is wild land, or unorganized territory—just squares on the map labeled C Township, or North C Surplus, or Section 37—but the back line of Upton runs north of us so technically at least we live in organized territory. Upton has one hundred and eighty-two inhabitants and the loveliest view in Maine.

The only other town that concerns us is Magalloway, which is too small to be on the road map or to have a post office. But it does have the Brown Farm, where our telephone line ends. Let me say at once that the Brown Farm isn't a farm, and our telephone line isn't a telephone line in the modern sense of the word. It is a fifteen-mile-long piece of wire, frail and uninsulated, strung haphazardly through the woods from tree to tree, and the private property of the lumber company, for communication with their various operations. We are hitched onto it only because once they cut down some of our trees by mistake, and extended this courtesy as reparation and apology. If it hasn't snowed lately, or the wind hasn't blown any trees down across the line, or if the wire hasn't sagged wearily into one of the many brooks it crosses, we can by cranking three times on the battery-powered telephone which hangs on the kitchen wall, talk to the Millers. Or we can ring four times and talk to Cliff, an old hermit who lives down on Umbagog. Or we can ring twice and get the disembodied voice that is all I know of Joe, at the Brown Farm.

we had seen in days, and we stopped to talk to him. He had just arrived there that morning, and he was about to build his first fire and cook his first meal. He invited us to stay and eat with him, because he felt like celebrating. He'd bought the place for a summer camp during the boom years, but he hadn't been able to come East from Chicago, where he lived, since 1929 Now, however, he'd sold some patent rights and not only was he going to spend the summer there, but if things turned out right, the rest of his life We were all touched and amused, I remember, by his enthusiasm.

Now that I know Ralph better, I know that there was nothing strange about his inviting us all to spend the rest of the week with him Since that day, eight years ago, I've known him to invite a week-end guest, whom he liked, to extend his visit from week to week until it lasted more than two years But at the time I thought, and I guess all the others thought, that he was crazy We stayed, though

We stayed, and we had a lovely time. We fished and sun-bathed and swam, and in between times I found out why a man so obviously dry behind the ears should want to bury himself in the woods for the rest of his life. Ever, since he was twelve years old he had been spending his summers at Coburn's and his winters wishing it were summer so he could go back to Coburn's Middle Dam was the place in all the world where he was happiest, and he'd always told himself that some day he'd live there permanently. It took a long time and a lot of doing, but finally he'd managed You see, Ralph, unlike me, has a single-track mind

My mind, however, did fall into a single track before that week was over I became obsessed with the idea that if I didn't see more—a lot more—of this Ralph Rich, I'd quietly go into a decline and die It's a common phenome-

Although not a farm, the Brown Farm is a number of other things, including a hospital and a de-lousing station for lumberjacks, a bunkhouse and mess-hall, a rest-cure for work-worn horses and a store house for the tremendous amounts of food and equipment necessary in the lumber camps *There used to be a clerk in that store house who had a splendid graft At that time the lumber company was* using a brand of canned goods that gave premiums for the labels off the cans,—a pickle dish for ten labels, a baby carriage for five hundred, and, I suppose, a Rolls Royce for a million The clerk isn't there any more, though His label-removing activities—they buy canned goods by the car lot—left him no time for his duties, and besides, the cooks in the camps got bored with having to open twenty anonymous cans before they happened on the sliced beets they were looking for He was about to retire, anyhow. He'd sold the things he didn't fancy himself, and had money in the bank

Once, seven years ago, I saw the Brown Farm, but I didn't know then what it was going to mean in my life, so I didn't pay much attention I don't remember what it looks like I was the school-teacher-on-vacation and my sister and I and some friends came up through this country on a canoe trip We went through the Parmachenee section, and then we debated whether we should come back through the Rangeleys and along Rapid River or not The guide insisted that this was the way to come—that although it involved a lot of work, the country was wild and beautiful and unspoiled enough to be worth a few paddle blisters, pack sores, and lame muscles So we finally gave in not too enthusiastically, being travel-frayed already

And that off-hand decision, in which I didn't even have a major part, was the accident by which I now live in a cabin in the woods As we walked along the Carry Road, we saw a man splitting wood in the yard of the only house

to our heads that we decided that from then on we would be writers.

We weren't, of course, because being a writer involves a lot more than just thinking it would be nice to be one. We sold our first attempt at fiction—which was probably bad for us as it gave us false confidence—and then we settled down to discover that writing is not all beer and skittles. But I think that now, at last, we are nearly writers. We don't wait for inspiration any more, having found that inspiration is mostly the application of the seat of the pants to the seat of a chair. We stall around, trying to put off writing, which I understand is the occupational disease of writers. We earn most of our living by the written word And we are utterly impatient with people who say, "I've often thought I could write myself"

It's taken me a great many words, I see, to answer the first questions people always ask us when they come out of the woods and find us here, unaccountably installed in a little clearing that is always full of the smell of pine and the sound of the river. That's a question that always crops up early in the conversation—"Doesn't the river get on your nerves?"—because until you get used to it, the dull roar, like heavy surf, seems to shake the air. It is all-pervading and inescapable, and you find yourself raising your voice higher and higher above it But after a while, unless the tone changes with the rise and fall of the water, you don't even hear it. You learn to pitch your voice, not louder to carry over it, but lower and deeper, so that it's not shattered by the vibration And finally all the places in the world that are away from the sound of furious white water come to seem empty and dead

I don't pretend to know all of the answers. I don't know what to answer when people say, "But isn't the way you live Escapism?" I don't even know, really, what escapism is. We haven't tried to escape from anything We have only

non, I believe, both in fact and in fiction. It doesn't need any explanation, if indeed it can be explained. It's seldom fatal, I understand, so probably I'd have recovered if I'd had to. I didn't have to. Almost immediately upon my return to Massachusetts, while I was trying to think up a reasonably plausible excuse for happening back to the Rangeley region at the time of year when people just don't go there, I began getting letters, telegrams, and finally telephone calls almost daily from Ralph. Then he began spending his time and money on the long and painful trek from Maine to Boston. It was in short a Courtship, and ended in the usual manner, with our deciding that this was a lot of expensive nonsense, so why didn't we get married?

I know that everybody who was ever in love has speculated along the following lines, but please bear with me while I do it once again. If, on that trip out of Parmachenee, one of us had stopped on the Carry Road two minutes to tie a shoe string, or if Ralph had split wood just a little bit faster, we would never have laid eyes upon him. He'd have been in the house and we'd have walked right by. But the timing was perfect, and that's how I happen to live in the woods.

How I happened to be a writer was just as sloppy and haphazard. I wrote a little number about Maine guides, at my sister's suggestion, for *Scribner's* Life in the United States Contest. I finished it in May, and the contest didn't close until September, so I thought I'd try it out on a couple of dogs first. I'd get it back in plenty of time to qualify.

Now this is not mock modesty. I was absolutely stupefied when the *Saturday Evening Post* bought it. Ralph was, too. But we rallied sufficiently to write another entry for the *Scribner's* contest, since our first had been scratched, as it were, and it won a prize. This double success so went

to our heads that we decided that from then on we would be writers.

We weren't, of course, because being a writer involves a lot more than just thinking it would be nice to be one. We sold our first attempt at fiction—which was probably bad for us as it gave us false confidence—and then we settled down to discover that writing is not all beer and skittles. But I think that now, at last, we are nearly writers. We don't wait for inspiration any more, having found that inspiration is mostly the application of the seat of the pants to the seat of a chair. We stall around, trying to put off writing, which I understand is the occupational disease of writers. We earn most of our living by the written word. And we are utterly impatient with people who say, "I've often thought I could write myself."

It's taken me a great many words, I see, to answer the first questions people always ask us when they come out of the woods and find us here, unaccountably installed in a little clearing that is always full of the smell of pine and the sound of the river. That's a question that always crops up early in the conversation—"Doesn't the river get on your nerves?"—because until you get used to it, the dull roar, like heavy surf, seems to shake the air. It is all-pervading and inescapable, and you find yourself raising your voice higher and higher above it. But after a while, unless the tone changes with the rise and fall of the water, you don't even hear it. You learn to pitch your voice, not louder to carry over it, but lower and deeper, so that it's not shattered by the vibration. And finally all the places in the world that are away from the sound of furious white water come to seem empty and dead.

I don't pretend to know all of the answers. I don't know what to answer when people say, "But isn't the way you live Escapism?" I don't even know, really, what escapism is. We haven't tried to escape from anything. We have only

non, I believe, both in fact and in fiction. It doesn't need any explanation, if indeed it can be explained. It's seldom fatal, I understand, so probably I'd have recovered if I'd had to. I didn't have to. Almost immediately upon my return to Massachusetts, while I was trying to think up a reasonably plausible excuse for happening back to the Rangeley region at the time of year when people just don't go there, I began getting letters, telegrams, and finally telephone calls almost daily from Ralph. Then he began spending his time and money on the long and painful trek from Maine to Boston. It was, in short, a Courtship, and ended in the usual manner, with our deciding that this was a lot of expensive nonsense, so why didn't we get married?

I know that everybody who was ever in love has speculated along the following lines, but please bear with me while I do it once again. If, on that trip out of Parmachenee, one of us had stopped on the Carry Road two minutes to tie a shoe string, or if Ralph had split wood just a little bit faster, we would never have laid eyes upon him. He'd have been in the house, and we'd have walked right by. But the timing was perfect, and that's how I happen to live in the woods.

of us We don't like to kill things, so our trapping activities are confined to a trap-line for mice and rats run by Gerrish and Rufus in the kitchen and corn patch. How we keep body and soul together is a mystery to the uninitiated At times it's a mystery to us as well.

We make a living in a variety of ways. For one thing, there's the taxi and transport service from Middle Dam to Sunday Cove and way-stations. The rates are a little bit flexible, depending on a number of things. Very often, in winter, woodsmen who are leaving the lumber camps call on us to take them and their turkeys—woods for knapsacks—up to Middle Dam If all goes well, the charge is a dollar. After Thanksgiving the road gets more and more treacherous as the snow gets deeper and deeper, and it becomes easier and easier to slide off into the ditch The passenger then is obliged to help get the car back onto the road. If this is a matter of a few shoves, the rate goes down to seventy-five cents If it requires a lot of snow shoveling and strenuous heaving, the fare decreases accordingly Sometimes it vanishes utterly You can't charge a man for spending half the morning with his shoulder to the tail board of a 1929 Essex truck, getting his clothes plastered with flying snow When that happens, Ralph just decides to make a social occasion of it and spends the rest of the morning visiting with Larry Parsons So far the situation has never seemed to demand that he pay the passenger for riding

I always feel a little apologetic about our being a four-car family After all, with only five miles of road available, it seems a little ostentatious, in view of our faded denim pants and patched work shirts, to be discussing *which* car to take to get the mail. It was worse, though, when the Packard was *running*.

The Packard was a 1917 Twin Six touring car, built on the general lines of a pre-Revolutionary four poster with

of us. We don't like to kill things, so our trapping activities are confined to a trap-line for mice and rats run by Gerrish and Rufus in the kitchen and corn patch. How we keep body and soul together is a mystery to the uninitiated. At times it's a mystery to us as well.

We make a living in a variety of ways. For one thing, there's the taxi and transport service from Middle Dam to Sunday Cove and way-stations. The rates are a little bit flexible depending on a number of things. Very often, in winter, woodsmen who are leaving the lumber camps call on us to take them and their turkeys—woods for knapsacks—up to Middle Dam. If all goes well, the charge is a dollar. After Thanksgiving the road gets more and more treacherous as the snow gets deeper and deeper, and it becomes easier and easier to slide off into the ditch. The passenger then is obliged to help get the car back onto the road. If this is a matter of a few shoves, the rate goes down to seventy-five cents. If it requires a lot of snow shoveling and strenuous heaving, the fare decreases accordingly. Sometimes it vanishes utterly. You can't charge a man for spending half the morning with his shoulder to the tail board of a 1929 Essex truck, getting his clothes plastered with flying snow. When that happens, Ralph just decides to make a social occasion of it and spends the rest of the morning visiting with Larry Parsons. So far the situation has never seemed to demand that he pay the passenger for riding.

I always feel a little apologetic about our being a four-car family. After all, with only five miles of road available, it seems a little ostentatious, in view of our faded denim pants and patched work shirts, to be discussing which car to take to get the mail. It was worse, though, when the Packard was running.

The Packard was a 1917 Twin Six touring car, built on the general lines of a pre-Revolutionary four poster with

break-up. That's what he was doing to this Model T one winter day when Ralph showed up. Gerrish is unhappy driving anything but a Model T—and I might add that anything but a Model T is apt to be unhappy after Gerrish has been driving it So Ralph ground the valves on the Parsons' snowboat, did something or other about the Parsons' lighting plant. fixed the plug in the Parsons' bath-tub, which had had to be held up with the bather's toe while the water ran out, in return for the Model T That is what is known as a deal.

The Model A, vintage of 1930, used to belong to Jim Barnett, the local lumber baron He had it in here one summer when he was getting out hurricane pine for the government. Under the aegis of several non-mechanical-minded straw bosses. clerks, and government scalers, it developed all the ailments that motors are heir to During its periods of hospitalization, Ralph did Jim's errands for him, and when Jim moved his camp out, he left the Model A in payment Ralph spent a happy fifty-nine-hour week investigating its innards with frequent summons for me to come out and view with horror what some damn-fool butcher had perpetrated on the wiring the pistons or the timing—I was always properly horrified as a good wife should be, but I never knew quite at what—and now the thing runs

People always ask how we got all these cars in here, there being no road from the Outside, and we always tell them that we took them apart packed them in on our backs over the trail, and set them up again Gratifyingly often we are believed Of course we really brought them in over the ice, or rafted them in on scows.

The hey-day of the transport business with this assorted fleet of animated junk, is summer. That is when the canoe trips go through here Some guide book of the lakes, which every camper in the world seems to have fallen afoul of,

brim and weigh enough to be a strain on the trailer hitch. It was unfortunate that the hitch chose to give way as we were going around a down-hill curve. We kept to the road, but the trailer went flying off into the woods, dodging a dozen trees with uncanny intelligence and coming up whango! against a house-size boulder. Cases flew in all directions, exploding as they landed. Cans of milk, figs in syrup, salmon, string beans, sliced peaches, clam chowder and what have you littered an acre of ground. We got out and looked at the wreck and at each other.

Ralph said a few things, and then he said, "Help me get the trailer back on the road, and I'll go home and fix the hitch while you pick up this mess."

It should be easy to pick up a few hundred cans and put them in piles. It wasn't. It would have been easier to pick up a covey of partridges. They were under leaves, behind rocks, down holes. While I was grubbing in the underbrush a can walloped me on the top of the head. Probably it had been lodged in a bush, but it seemed to have leaped from the ground with malicious intent. I had been hot and mad and disgusted and now I was hurt as well. And I still couldn't find three cans. I haven't found them yet. I went home.

It was half past eleven and Ralph was still working on the trailer hitch, he having had his troubles, too. Our clients were still, presumably, sitting at Sunday Cove, and almost certainly thinking hard thoughts about us. Just as we were debating what to do next, they walked into the yard, having got tired of waiting.

The least we could do was to invite them to lunch, with apologies and promises that everything would shortly be under control, and that as soon as we had eaten we would go after the canoe. I walked back to the scene of the wreck, collected some corned beef, spinach and pineapple slices, and threw together a meal, while Ralph finished the hitch.

brim and weigh enough to be a strain on the trailer hitch. It was unfortunate that the hitch chose to give way as we were going around a down-hill curve. We kept to the road, but the trailer went flying off into the woods, dodging a dozen trees with uncanny intelligence and coming up whango! against a house-size boulder Cases flew in all directions, exploding as they landed. Cans of milk, figs in syrup, salmon, string beans, sliced peaches, clam chowder and what have you littered an acre of ground We got out and looked at the wreck and at each other

Ralph said a few things, and then he said, "Help me get the trailer back on the road, and I'll go home and fix the hitch while you pick up this mess"

It should be easy to pick up a few hundred cans and put them in piles It wasn't. It would have been easier to pick up a covey of partridges They were under leaves, behind rocks, down holes While I was grubbing in the underbrush a can walloped me on the top of the head. Probably it had been lodged in a bush, but it seemed to have leaped from the ground with malicious intent I had been hot and mad and disgusted and now I was hurt as well. And I still couldn't find three cans. I haven't found them yet. I went home.

It was half past eleven and Ralph was still working on the trailer hitch, he having had his troubles, too Our clients were still, presumably, sitting at Sunday Cove, and almost certainly thinking hard thoughts about us Just as we were debating what to do next, they walked into the yard having got tired of waiting.

The least we could do was to invite them to lunch, with apologies and promises that everything would shortly be under control, and that as soon as we had eaten we would go after the canoe. I walked back to the scene of the wreck, collected some corned beef, spinach, and pineapple slices, and threw together a meal, while Ralph finished the hitch

woodsmen suffering from third degree burns, all manner of cuts and fractures, pneumonia, and delirium tremens, known hereabouts as "the horrors." He has hauled a litter of pigs, bound for the garbage disposal department of a lumber camp He has hauled news-reel men and their cameras, covering the National Championship White Water Races, and fire wardens covering a forest fire. But the ones I like best and he hates the most are the girls' camps

He hates the girls' camps because he claims that, in spite of the fact that the girls are always under the auspices of a guide and two or three counselors, you might as well try to organize a handful of quicksilver I like them, because I like to see the old boy get his come-uppance He gets them all packed in nicely around their canoes and duffel, and someone decides she has to have a picture of the outfit, but that Tessie's skinned knee and Vera's camp letter won't show, so will everybody please rearrange themselves? Or Muggsy can't find her sweater, so everything has to be unpacked Or someone has a notion, and the notion spreads, and in a flash the whole works is streaming off into the bushes. It drives him nuts, being, so he says, me raised to the nth degree.

The most recent invasion got even Gerrish down. Ralph went to Middle to get them—fifteen of them from some camp over in Vermont—and stopped here to re-fill his radiator They swarmed into the yard like a pack of beagles, with an old and completely resigned guide making perfunctory motions of bringing them to heel. While his charges were posing for snap-shots with Kyak, who makes swell local color to show the home folks, he came in to ask permission to build a lunch fire on our land. I asked him how he liked his job. He sighed wearily. "Wal, it ain't no *position*," he said with feeling.

This is the last step before putting the map on paper, and this is where Ralph came into the picture.

One of the rodmen was taken ill, the appropriation for the survey was almost gone, and the head surveyor was loath to lose time and money waiting for his man to recover So he appealed to Ralph to help him out, assuring him that all he had to do was stroll through the woods with a string tied to his arm, stop when shouted to, and blaze the nearest tree. He didn't say that they would be working in B Pond territory

There is nothing the matter with B Pond It lies to the south of us, over a beech-covered ridge, and it is lovely and placid and wild But Ralph loathes B Pond, because the trail over is rough and steep. He'd rather be dead than take a trip over the B Pond trail.

Nevertheless, every day that he worked for the Survey he went to B Pond, and he didn't go by trail That isn't the way the Survey does things. They pick out a point at random, consult their notes and learn that somewhere a mile off to the S S W is a white cloth tied to a yellow birch, take out their compasses, tighten their belts, and start looking for it The rodman—Ralph—goes ahead, trailing a hundred-yard piece of string When the end of the string comes abreast of the surveyor, he puts up a shout and the rodman stops and makes his blaze. As soon as the surveyor overtakes him, he sets out again, in theory, at least, letting nothing turn him aside from a perfectly straight line. This would be a cinch on the plains of the West, but this is rough country, and we had a hurricane in 1938

The results of the hurricane here have to be seen to be believed. Acres of trees are piled up like jackstraws in windrows forty feet high and half a mile long A rodman doesn't go around these He goes over and through them Ralph insists that one whole day he never had his feet on the ground except when he came down for lunch. The

The Millers had helped us out in more pinches than I can remember, and it wasn't often that I had a chance to do much for them. This was a God-given opportunity to lend a hand. I'd peel the larder down to the last bone, and be glad of the chance. If I saved out a dozen eggs and a couple of cans of corned beef, and beans and salt pork and split peas and flour and corn meal, we could eat for the few days until the lake was clear, even if it wasn't a very balanced diet We had plenty of canned milk and potatoes. I told her what I could let her have

"Swell! I'll send someone down with a pack-sack!"

She hung up and in due time her emissary arrived. I gave him everything I could spare, and he staggered off up the Carry Road under the load.

Barely was he out of sight when the telephone rang again A man's voice said pleasantly, "Mis' Rich? This is Ban Barnett I'm down at Sunday Cove, with a crew of three We walked in over the old Magalloway trail to fix the Carry Road before the drive comes in, and we'll be right up We'll stay at your place for two-three days, like always"

"Did you bring any food?" I asked with regrettable lack of hospitality.

"Food? Holy God, Mis' Rich, we had all we could do to get ourselves through that Jees'ly swamp!"

"Ban," I said desperately, "I can't board you I've hardly got enough food in the house to feed the family. You'll have to—"

He'd have to what? The Millers couldn't feed four more. The Parsons weren't any better off than I was They couldn't go home, nine miles through the swamp and over a mountain, with nothing under their belts.

"You can feed us," Ban assured me with touching faith. "You got potatoes and salt, ain't you?"

I fed them for three days, and ever since I have had

culverts, and leveling out the worst ruts, and the tax sale is forestalled for another twelve months. Oh, you can get along with very little cash money in this country if you know the ropes and are sufficiently adaptable

I was being very adaptable the day Ted Benson called me up from Pond-in-the-River Dam. Ted is the boss of the dam repair crew that travels about the country from headquarters in Lewiston. They always stay at Miller's when they are in this neck of the woods, and when they are working on Pondy Dam, Alice Miller sends down the makings of dinner, and they prepare it over an open camp-fire. Ted is a Dane, and his name is really Theodore (pronounced Tay-o-dorr) Bendtsen. He has been in this country ever since almost half a century ago as an apprentice to the Danish Merchant Marine he deserted ship at Portland, but when he gets excited he still lapses into Danish on the hard words. He was very much excited on this occasion

I finally made out that he wanted me to come up to the dam and cook dinner for him and his crew of nine. His long-string-of-Danish cook had been out over the week-end and had too bad a hang-over to be of any use to anyone. It wouldn't be any work at all. Mis' Miller had everything all ready. All I had to do was heat it up. He'd do it himself only dam repairing had reached a crisis where not a man could be spared. Would I come?

I would be glad to. I like Ted, and I'd like to do him a favor. Ralph had gone to Upton to vote in the state elections so there was nothing to keep me at home. I locked up the dogs—we had five then, that was when we thought a dog team would be a good idea—put Rufus into a pack sack—he was too young to walk—loaded him onto my back and went up to the dam

A fire was already burning under the grate that Ted had salvaged from an abandoned steamboat and placed on the

The fire had died down a little, so I put some wood on, saw that the boiled dinner had commenced to steam gently, and took the coffee pot down to the river to fill it with water. When I got back, Ted was again retiring down the dam fill, the clock said five minutes of eleven, Rufus had untied himself and was eating cheese, and there were ants on the pie. I took the cheese away, tied Rufus up, set the clock back fifteen minutes, brushed the ants off, and covered the pies with a clean dish towel. Then I sat down on the stump beside the clock and waited for the boiled dinner to boil. It was quarter of eleven by my time, which by then had nothing to do with any other time on earth.

Pretty soon the big kettle began to rumble quietly, sending out clouds of steam and a delicious odor, and Ted started up from the dam, walking briskly and dangling something in his hand. I took one look and set the clock back five more minutes. It was a two pound salmon, and my prophetic soul informed me, rightly, that he wanted it cooked for his dinner. Boiled, he said, with melted butter on it. I took off the boiled dinner, set the coffee pot on, and went down to the river with an extra pan to get some water for the fish. When I got back the clock again said five minutes of eleven. I set it back to quarter of, edged the coffee pot over to make room for the salmon, and put some butter in a pannikin on the edge of the fire to melt.

Rufus was eating leaves, which might or might not be edible, and although by then I didn't much care which they were, I fished them out of his mouth, getting my finger bitten in the process, and set out the salt, pepper, and vinegar. A loud hissing behind my back indicated that the coffee had boiled over and put out the fire. I took the coffee off, burning my hand, and built up the fire with some birch bark. Ted's fish was boiling, and Ted was coming up from the dam again, so I stuck a fork into it, decided it was near enough done as made no difference, and

Rufus one other thing, I'm going to teach them that. I think it's important.

When I get my own family's sweaters and mittens and socks done for the winter, I knit for whoever will pay me—neighbors, lumberjacks, anyone. Also I sew on buttons and patch clothes for woodsmen, whenever there are lumbering operations in here. I don't like to sew, and I don't sew very well, but I do better than most lumberjacks. Ralph, coming across an article about Father Hubbard, the Glacier Priest, took to calling me Mother Hubbard, the winter I started acting as housemother to the woodsmen. It applied, but not as he meant it to. I'm not a snappy model; I really don't wear Mother Hubbards, but the effect is about the same.

Had Ralph been born a little earlier, he would have been a Yankee horse-trader. As it is, he doesn't do so badly with his car trading, in a country where trading is a religion. Albert Allen, a friend from Upton who has lived all his life in this vicinity, covered the general attitude one day. "Nope," he said. "I'd be ashamed to give it to anybody. 'Taint good enough. But maybe I can find someone who'll make a trade." No matter what you start with, here, if you stick with it long enough, you'll get what you want. All you need is something to start with. Will Morton, who lives on Rifle Point, off Middle Dam, and who is the oldest working guide in the state, being eighty-two—and one of the best—started out with an electric razor, which one of his sports gave him for Christmas. He ended with a boat, which was what he had in mind all the time. I've forgotten, unfortunately, the intermediate steps.

Ralph's most remarkable operation was the trading of the old Model T touring car. There was a lumber camp over on Sunday Pond three miles north of us then, and one gray November day the clerk of the camp called up and announced that he'd heard Ralph had a lot of cars

without any trouble." Just like that. And then I swear he went out and measured gas into the tank with a teaspoon, so that Mac could get to the nearest source of supply, but not much further.

That night Mac went to Errol to see his girl. The next day it snowed eighteen inches The rest of the winter the Ford sat under a drift at Sunday Cove—on this side of the Cove, as requested—and never turned a wheel. In the spring Ralph drove it home I should think he'd lie awake nights, but he doesn't. He has the horse-trader conscience, I guess

I haven't I'm a rotten trader. But I did do one deal that gives me perennial satisfaction I think I came out all right, but even if I didn't, even if I got gypped out of my eye-teeth as Ralph says I did, I'm very happy about the whole thing

There are three boats and a canoe that go with the place, and of course everybody uses them But they really were Ralph's boats I wanted a boat of my own, to use and possibly abuse as I chose I wanted a boat I could put into a pool downriver and not be asked, "When are you going to bring that boat back to the Pond? I want to use it" So when the Bernier boat—Bernier was a famous builder of the type of boat called the Rangeley boat—began to go to pieces from neglect, Ralph gave it to me. The idea was that I would fix it up myself and it would be mine.

Well, I just didn't get around to it, somehow, and it continued to lie on the shore of the Pond, with the paint flaking off, the wood drying out, and the caulking falling from the seams And that's where Gerrish enters the picture.

He said to me casually, "Ralph tells me that Bernier boat belongs to you"

I thought I felt a deal coming on, and I'd observed

sheathing. But he has a whole shop full of that kind of stuff. I should think he'd be glad—but he doesn't seem to be. It would bother me a lot more if I didn't remember Mac and the Model T.

My sister and I used to play a game called "Husband's Occupation?" It was a simple-minded game that we made up off application blanks of various sorts. One of us would ask suddenly, "Husband's Occupation?" and the other had to think up a possible but not very probable answer. "Flea trainer," for example. Or "Percheron Faulter." Or "Sealer of Weights and Measures." I guess we were easily entertained.

I guess we still are, because I am amused, spasmodically, at being married to a Maine guide. Oh, yes, Ralph's a guide, too, although he doesn't work at it much.

Of course a guide has to be a good woodsman and canoeman and camp cook and emergency doctor, and the State of Maine ascertains that he is, before issuing him a license to guide. But he could never earn a living if he didn't also make the grade with the sports—same as dudes of the West—as "quite a character." He has to be laconic. He has to be picturesque. Maine guides have a legend of quaintness to uphold, and, boy! do they uphold it. They're so quaint that they creak. They ought to be. They work hard enough at it.

Here's the Maine guide. He wears what amounts to a uniform. It consists of a wool shirt, preferably plaid, nicely faded to soft, warm tones, dark pants, either plus-fours, for some unknown reason, or riding breeches; wool socks and the soleless, Indian-type moccasin or high laced boots. He carries a bandanna in his hip pocket and may or may not wear another knotted around his neck. But he must wear a battered felt hat, with a collection of salmon flies stuck in the band, and he must wear it with an air; and he must wear a hunting knife day and night; and he must

having "helped" paddle for ten or twelve miles, stretch out around the fire. Down on the shingle that natural philosopher, that real character, Bobcat Bill, washes the dishes. The water glows like blood-stained ebony in the leaping light, and the firs stand up behind, black and motionless. Back in the bush a fox barks and a deer crashes away from the scent of wood-smoke. All around lies the wilderness, dark and unknown and sinister. Inside the little pool of light is all that is left of the safe and familiar—the canoes drawn up on the shore, the piled packsacks and blanket rolls, the forms and faces of friends. A loon sends its lost-soul lament over the darkling water and a shiver runs around the fire. Then Bobcat Bill strolls up from the lake, throws an armful of dry-ks onto the blaze and begins tossing blankets toward the group. In the flash of a buck's tail the old magic begins to work. The tight little fire-hearted circle of fellowship is formed. We're all brothers here, united by our common cause against the power of the black beyond. We're all valiant, noble renegades from civilization's chafing bonds. We're dangerous and free!

The loon throws its blood-curdling cry against the mountains once more, and laughs its crazy laughter.

"Never hear one of them critters a-hollerin'," Bobcat Bill drifts easily into his act, "but what it 'minds me of one time I was lost up on them big caribou barrens across the lake. That's how I come by this here scar on my shoulder. Reason I was up in there, a feller had met foul play—"

I'm making guides sound like a bunch of frauds, and I don't mean to. They work hard and they're in a difficult position. Like all merchandisers, they're obliged to give the customer what he wants, and it's their tough luck that the customer wants adventure. Adventure, free of actual risk, is hard to produce; and the state frowns on the actual killing off of sports, even by accident. So the guide has to make the customer believe himself Daniel Boone's

having "helped" paddle for ten or twelve miles, stretch out around the fire. Down on the shingle that natural philosopher, that real character, Bobcat Bill, washes the dishes. The water glows like blood-stained ebony in the leaping light, and the firs stand up behind, black and motionless. Back in the bush a fox barks and a deer crashes away from the scent of wood-smoke All around lies the wilderness, dark and unknown and sinister Inside the little pool of light is all that is left of the safe and familiar—the canoes drawn up on the shore, the piled packsacks and blanket rolls, the forms and faces of friends A loon sends its lost-soul lament over the darkling water, and a shiver runs around the fire Then Bobcat Bill strolls up from the lake, throws an armful of dry-ki onto the blaze and begins tossing blankets toward the group In the flash of a buck's tail the old magic begins to work The tight little fire-hearted circle of fellowship is formed We're all brothers here, united by our common cause against the power of the black beyond We're all valiant, noble renegades from civilization's chafing bonds. We're dangerous and free!

The loon throws its blood-curdling cry against the mountains once more, and laughs its crazy laughter

"Never hear one of them critters a-hollerin'," Bobcat Bill drifts easily into his act, "but what it 'minds me of one time I was lost up on them big caribou barrens across the lake That's how I come by this here scar on my shoulder. Reason I was up in there, a feller had met foul play—"

I'm making guides sound like a bunch of frauds, and I don't mean to They work hard and they're in a difficult position Like all merchandisers, they're obliged to give the customer what he wants, and it's their tough luck that the customer wants adventure Adventure, free of actual risk, is hard to produce; and the state frowns on the actual killing off of sports, even by accident. So the guide has to make the customer believe himself Daniel Boone's

the bottom. Between times he hauled his sports out of the water—they were great fallers-in—and dodged erratic backcasts. He had a very active day. Along about dusk a great outcry went up. Someone had caught a fish. An enormous salmon, so he said. Ralph netted it. It was a small chub. The chub is a poor relation of the carp family, and we natives look down our noses at them. Even the cats won't eat them. The politician wasn't so choosey. He took it home. Probably he has it mounted over his desk now.

Ralph finally got three of his party put to bed. The fourth—he of the chub—refused to go. He'd tasted blood and he wasn't going to waste time sleeping. Ralph left him sitting on the bank of the river with a quart of Scotch conveniently at hand. It was pitch dark, which not only put him in the legal position of being a breaker of the half-hour-after-sunset law, but also in the impractical position of not being able to see his line. The first consideration didn't bother him. The second he got around by using a powerful flashlight trained on his fly. He caught no fish, but he had fun.

The other thing that we do for a living is write. This is the most important, because we spend the most time on it, and because the larger part of our income is derived from it. Probably if we spent the same amount of time and energy working in a factory or selling brushes from door to door, we'd have more money and fewer headaches. But there are other things we wouldn't have.

In theory, at least, one of the advantages of writing is that you can work anywhere and any time. You aren't tied down. Actually this is true only within limits. I have found that unless I make myself some office hours and stick to them—8.30 to 11 A.M. and 1 to 3 P.M.—I don't do any writing. I pick some wild flowers and arrange them, wash the dog, and make a cake, and then it's too late to start this morning. So I read another chapter of the book I

the bottom. Between times he hauled his sports out of the water—they were great fallers-in—and dodged erratic backcasts. He had a very active day. Along about dusk a great outcry went up Someone had caught a fish. An *enormous* salmon, so he said. Ralph netted it. It was a *small chub* The chub is a poor relation of the carp family, and we natives look down our noses at them Even the cats won't eat them. The politician wasn't so choosey. He *took* it home. Probably he has it mounted over his desk now.

Ralph finally got three of his party put to bed. The fourth—he of the chub—refused to go. He'd tasted blood and he wasn't going to waste time sleeping. Ralph left him sitting on the bank of the river with a quart of Scotch conveniently at hand. It was pitch dark, which not only put him in the legal position of being a breaker of the half-hour-after-sunset law, but also in the impractical position of not being able to see his line. The first consideration didn't bother him. The second he got around by using a powerful flashlight trained on his fly He caught no fish. but he had fun.

The other thing that we do for a living is write. This is the most important, because we spend the most time on it, and because the larger part of our income is derived from it. Probably if we spent the same amount of time and energy working in a factory or selling brushes from door to door, we'd have more money and fewer headaches. But there are other things we wouldn't have.

In theory, at least, one of the advantages of writing is that you can work anywhere and any time. You aren't tied down. Actually this is true only within limits. I have found that unless I make myself some office hours and stick to them—8 30 to 11 A.M and 1 to 3 P.M—I don't do any writing. I pick some wild flowers and arrange them, wash the dog, and make a cake, and then it's too late to start this morning. So I read another chapter of the book I

writing down, and condescension is immediately apparent to, and rightly resented by, the editor. I believe that any writer who sells enough to eat off the proceeds is writing the very best he can all the time When he stops, he stops eating.

I've read a lot of first-rate writing, and I have some critical sense; so I know where I stand. I'll never be *first-rate.* I'll improve with practice, I trust, but I haven't got what it takes to reach the top However, I hope I'll never make the excuse *that* "it's only a pot-boiler, after all" Everything I write, no matter how lousy it turns out to be, is the very best I am capable of at the time. My writing may be third-rate but at least it's honest You can't be even a third-rate writer without taking your work seriously.

But if you take it seriously, chances are that others will, too, and I enjoy having a fool-proof excuse for not doing the things I don't want to do. *If I said*, "Oh, I can't I have to do my mending" the answer would be, "You can do it this evening" If I say, "Oh, I can't. I'm working on my book." there's no argument about it at all. It's wonderful. I hardly ever do things I don't want to do any more. Except write

Writing is hard work, and don't let anybody tell you otherwise It's hard on the eyes, the back the fanny, the disposition and the nail-polish It's hard on the nerves Your income is so uncertain. You never know, when you're sweating blood over a story, *whether* the editor is going to hold his nose or cheer and send you a check for—

And that's *another thing* People don't mind asking a writer how much he gets paid for a story There *must be* some explanation for *such* a breach of good taste in otherwise well-bred persons I have been coping with the situation by stalling. I say, "*Well* that depends It would be impossible to say. Some magazines pay higher rates than

time I got to see him was during school hours. It made a difference in my attitude, but it didn't last very long In spite of all the sentences I diagrammed for him, and the arithmetic answers I slipped under my desk into his eager palm, come Valentine's Day, he spent all his pocket money on a big lace and ribbon heart for a blonde who sat over in the dumb section, and who didn't know a verb from a common denominator It soured me on the male for a time, but it taught me a lesson that has been valuable ever since: to wit, men may admire and use brains in a woman, but they don't love them I reverted to my hatred of winter.

After I grew up, I still hated it, and I think that now I know the reason why In civilization we try to combat winter. We try to modify it so that we can continue to live the same sort of life that we live in summer. We plow the sidewalks so we can wear low shoes, and the roads so we can use cars We heat every enclosed space and then, inadequately clad dash quickly from one little pocket of hot air through a bitter no-man's land of cold to another We fool around with sun lamps, trying to convince our skins that it is really August, and we eat travel-worn spinach in an attempt to sell the same idea to our stomachs. Naturally, it doesn't work very well You can neither remodel nor ignore a thing as big as winter.

In the woods we don't try to. We just let winter be winter, and any adjustments that have to be made, we make in ourselves and our way of living We have to. The skin between outdoors and indoors here is so much thinner than it is even in a small town, that it's sometimes hard to tell where one stops and the other begins We can't dress, for example, for a day in the house Such a thing doesn't exist. We have to go outdoors continually—to get in wood, to go to the john, to run down to the other house and put wood on the kitchen fire, to get water, to hack a piece of steak off the frozen deer hanging in the woodshed, or for

others, and some writers are better than others—" And blah, blah, blah.

But I'm not going to stall any more. The next time anyone asks me how much I got for a story, I'm going to tell them. I might even tell them the truth. And then I'm going to say, "And what does *your* husband earn in a year?" That ought to settle that.

Upon reflection, I conclude that probably the best short answer to "How do you earn a living?" would be "From hand to mouth."

III



"But You Don't Live Here All the Year 'Round?"

WHAT PEOPLE REALLY MEAN WHEN THEY ASK US IF WE live here the year 'round, is "But good Lord! Certainly you don't stay in here during the winter? You must be crazy!" Well, all right, we're crazy. I would have thought so myself, before I tried it

I used to hate winter, too When I was a child it was because winter meant school, and although I got along reasonably well there, school was something to be considered with nausea. Along about February I used to think of the *stretch of time until June and freedom with such a hope*less depression as I have never known since It just didn't seem possible that I could live that long. The only time in my whole scholastic career that I ever liked school was one spell when I was in the eighth grade; and the reason for my change of heart then had nothing to do with my studies. I fell in love with the boy who sat in front of me, and since *he lived over on the other side of town*, the only

and about an inch thick—too thick to wet through, and much too thick to chill through. They look as though they'd be wonderful, but you can't get them in this country. Some of the native lumberjacks try to achieve the same effect by buying old-fashioned black buckled galoshes, about four sizes too big, and wearing four or five pairs of socks in them. They keep the feet warm, but it's like wearing a bucket on each foot. A few people wear high leather boots, but almost everyone else agrees that they are cold damn things Nobody would be caught dead in a pair of ski boots. They're too stiff and heavy. Let the city folks have them They don't know any better.

Myself, I wear one pair of wool socks and the lightest, cheapest pair of sneakers I can buy, and nobody can convince me that this isn't the answer. Everyone else is working on the wrong principle, that of getting more and more layers between their feet and the cold. That's wrong. What they gain in insulation they sacrifice in foot flexibility Their feet are just two petrified lumps wrapped in wool. According to my system, articulation isn't interfered with, and the blood circulates freely, bringing heat from the body to the feet as a hot water heating system brings heat to the radiators I haven't been able to win any disciples to my belief. but that's all right Neither have I ever had my feet frost-bitten

I seem to have devoted a lot of space to what we wear on our feet in winter, but it's quite in proportion to the amount of time spent talking and thinking about it It's a very vital matter.

Outside, life takes on pace with the approach of winter. It is the gay season, the season of parties and theatres and all the other things that will help people forget that outdoors something that they can't cope with is going on Here life slows down, just as the world around us slows down The leaves fall from the hardwood trees. Spruce and fir

any one of a dozen other reasons. Outdoors is just another, bigger, colder room. When we get up in the morning we dress with the idea that we'll be using this other room all day. When we step into it we make the concession of putting on mittens—if we're really going to be there long enough.

Everyone in here dresses more or less alike, until it comes to foot gear. We all, male and female, wear plaid wool shirts—two of them sometimes—and wool pants, ski or riding. We wear wool caps and home-made mittens, with leather mittens, called choppers, over them. The choppers don't keep the hands warm, but they keep the mittens dry and prevent their wearing out. We all wear wool socks. And there the great woods schism begins. Everyone has his own pet ideas of the proper footwear for below zero weather. No one will listen to any one else's opinion on the subject. Everyone knows he is right, and *no one will dabble with experiments. Feet freeze too easily* and frozen feet are too painful and serious to be courted deliberately.

Ralph belongs to the great gum-boot school of thought Gum-boots have high leather tops sewed on rubber feet. They are loose and roomy, and their addicts wear two or three pairs of heavy wool socks inside them I guess they're all right, if you like them. Larry Parsons swears by laced, all-rubber knee boots and two pairs of socks He claims that the leather tops of gum-boots get soaked when there is wet snow, and then where are you? The answer to that is that healthy feet perspire a little, and there is no chance for evaporation through rubber. So by night your socks are going to be wet anyhow, and what difference does it make how you get them wet? The Finnish lumberjacks who brought their equipment from the old country—and there are quite a number of them around here—have a good foot gear, consisting of heavy felt boots, knee high

and about an inch thick—too thick to wet through, and much too thick to chill through. They look as though they'd be wonderful, but you can't get them in this country. Some of the native lumberjacks try to achieve the same effect by buying old-fashioned black buckled galoshes, about four sizes too big, and wearing four or five pairs of socks in them They keep the feet warm, but it's like wearing a bucket on each foot. A few people wear high leather boots, but almost everyone else agrees that they are cold damn things. Nobody would be caught dead in a pair of ski boots. They're too stiff and heavy. Let the city folks have them They don't know any better.

Myself, I wear one pair of wool socks and the lightest, cheapest pair of sneakers I can buy, and nobody can convince me that this isn't the answer Everyone else is working on the wrong principle, that of getting more and more layers between their feet and the cold. That's wrong. What they gain in insulation they sacrifice in foot flexibility. Their feet are just two petrified lumps wrapped in wool. According to my system, articulation isn't interfered with, and the blood circulates freely, bringing heat from the body to the feet as a hot water heating system brings heat to the radiators I haven't been able to win any disciples to my belief but that's all right Neither have I ever had my feet frost-bitten

I seem to have devoted a lot of space to what we wear on our feet in winter, but it's quite in proportion to the amount of time spent talking and thinking about it. It's a very vital matter

Outside life takes on pace with the approach of winter. It is the gay season, the season of parties and theatres and all the other things that will help people forget that outdoors something that they can't cope with is going on Here life slows down, just as the world around us slows down. The leaves fall from the hardwood trees Spruce and fir

and pine stop growing and stand, dormant and black and thick, on mountain-side and lake-shore, their slim tips pointing monotonously to the gray sky. Of course they don't move, but they seem to draw silently in around us. We realize suddenly what we have forgotten: that after all, there are only three families of us—only a dozen puny human souls strung out along the lake and river—against all the forces of nature To the people Outside, "the forces of nature" is a convenient phrase out of a textbook. To us they are a reality. We know we haven't a Chinaman's chance of controlling them. We only hope we can outmaneuver them.

I always feel like a renegade when the first little powder snow comes It never lasts long, and it isn't serious, but the proper attitude is the long face, the foreboding shake of the head, and the grim comment that it won't be long now. I would like to act as Kyak does, and go tearing around in circles, scooping up mouthfuls of snow as a fast train scoops up water, and leaping crazily and prodigiously over little snow-covered trees. I don't, partly because any tree I could leap over wouldn't be worth bothering with and I'd probably fall flat on my fanny anyhow, but mostly because I'd simply be too unpopular if anyone suspected my anti-social liking of winter. So I try to remember that in February, when the snow is four feet or more deep on the level and I'm flopping inexpertly around on snowshoes, I'll be cursing the day the stuff was invented and offering my hope of Heaven for a good long look at a patch of bare ground. I turn my attention to the first piece of out-maneuvering that we have to attend to

That is the circumventing of the freeze-up, our official beginning of winter. That's the fall in-between period, when the lake is just frozen and the ice is too thick to put a boat through and too thin to support a man or a horse or a car. We never know when the freeze-up is going to

start or how long it's going to last. The only thing we do know is that while it's going on, we are completely bottled up. The nearest A & P is some forty miles away, but it might as well be in Egypt. Whatever we are going to need over a period of two or three weeks, we have to bring in before the Arm starts to freeze over. Tea, coffee, sugar, flour—I go over the list in my sleep. Oatmeal, canned meat and fish, fruit, and vegetables. And canned milk! Good Lord, if I'd forgotten that again! One year we forgot it and the Parsons forgot it, and the Millers didn't buy any because they keep a cow and didn't have to. So the cow chose that time, of all times, to go dry. We all learned, the hard way, to like black coffee and tea. I still like it, but I don't like to remember how oatmeal tastes without milk on it.

The real problem, though, is fresh meat and eggs and butter. If we bring them in too early and the weather warms up, we have the most horrible phenomena known to the thrifty Yankee heart and soul—good food, slowly spoiling. If we cut the margin too fine, we wake up some morning and find a half an inch of ice—a futile and infuriating amount—on the lakes. So we watch the barometer and thermometer and stars and the thickness of Kyak's pelt and listen to the weather broadcasts on the radio and rush out at all hours of the day and night to hold a wet finger to the wind. And sometimes we guess right and sometimes we don't. So far we've managed to survive the consequences of errors in our computations, but it's a pretty harassing period to go through, all the same.

Luckily for our sanity, the deer-hunting season furnishes a distraction around freeze-up time. Of course, everyone in here goes hunting. It isn't sport with us, though. We want and need the deer meat. (Only snobs and city people say venison, I early learned.) Hunting is a business with us. There are plenty of deer. In the summer, when it's against the law to shoot them, they stand around the yard

under foot in romantic, negligent poses, fairly screaming to have their pictures taken. They come into the flower garden at night, and with great discrimination eat the blossoms off all the more difficult flowers to raise, turning up their delicate noses at such common fodder as zinnias and nasturtiums Again in the dead of winter when their natural foods are buried deep under the snow, they drift into the clearing to eat hay or excelsior or cardboard boxes out of the dump, or anything else they can find We couldn't shoot them then even if the law allowed; they are too gaunt and pathetic—"too poor," as they say up here. Anyhow they wouldn't be fit to eat. They've already been driven to browsing on cedar, with the result that they taste like furniture polish During the hunting season, when they are fat and sleek and it's legal to kill them, every deer in the country remembers a man he has to see about a horse back in the thick growth on the highest ridges It's uncanny. Ralph estimates that by the time he has caught up with one and shot it and dragged it out, estimating his time at the current local wage of thirty-five cents an hour and taking into account expenditure of shoe leather, ammunition, and wear and tear on clothes, but with no charge for loss of temper, the meat comes to about ten dollars a pound. He doesn't like deer meat, anyhow, so probably his figures are padded He says he'd rather eat an old goat and be done with it So he goes out only when I drive him out, almost at the point of his own gun.

Larry Parsons was in the same frame of mind one year. We were up there one afternoon when he came in from hunting. He'd been out all day, and he was a rig. His shirt was torn, his face was scratched, and frozen mud caked his boots and pants. He told us in no uncertain terms that that was definitely that. He didn't give a damn if he never shot another deer. For all of him, every unspeakable deer in the State of Maine could go climb a tree—an interesting

possibility, zoologically speaking, only Larry wasn't speaking zoologically. He was speaking *from* the heart. He had been over at Black Cat, got into a swamp, crawled through blowdown for two miles or more, and when he went to eat his lunch, found it gone from his back pocket So he was through He'd eat potatoes and salt if he had to. He'd eat nothing, if it came to that But never, never, so help him Hannah, would he step foot out of the house again, after a deer.

At this point Al, who had been listening with the look *of sympathy we all learn to assume to cover up the fact* that we are inwardly estimating just how soon it will be safe to broach the subject of deer hunting again, squeaked and pointed out the back window. In the middle of the clothes yard stood an eight-point buck Larry shattered every existing record in oath-breaking The kitchen floor smoked as he crossed it He missed the first shot, and the buck obligingly turned broad-side. He couldn't miss the second time It must have been a feeble-minded buck. From the eugenic viewpoint, it was undoubtedly better for the race that he didn't live to propagate his kind.

The real excitement of the deer-hunting season isn't hunting deer, though It's hunting deer-hunters. It's always the same, every year. Any night that Ralph comes in at sunset and says, "It's going to turn cold tonight. We'd better get in some extra fire-place wood," I know what's going to happen We go out into the lovely still dusk for the wood, but I can't really appreciate the black silhouettes the pines on the western ridge make against the orange and apple-green sky, nor the wreaths of steam that begin to rise from the river as the temperature of the air drops below that of the water I'm too busy wondering how soon the telephone will start ringing

It usually starts just at full dusk. It may be the Millers calling, or Cliff Wiggin, or the Brown Farm, but it all

amounts to the same thing "Say, you ain't seen anything of a couple of hunters, have you? Yeah, they're stayin' here. Went out this morning and they'd ought to have been back an hour ago. Well, sort of keep your ears open for signals, will you, and call me up if you hear anything—"

We'll hear something, all right. Just after we've decided that, thank God, they're lost in some other neck of the woods and aren't our responsibility, and have changed into slippers for a quiet evening in the home, Kyak will look interestedly out of the window and indulge in a short "woof." We'll go out onto the porch to listen. Sure enough, faint and far away will come the sound of three grouped shots, the universal woods signal of distress. It's a signal that can't be ignored. I don't know what would happen to a person who turned a deaf ear to three shots, but I more than half believe that the nearest tree would fall and crush him to a pulp It should, anyhow

Ralph groans, gets his gun, fires the two answering shots that mean, "O.K. I hear you Now for the love of Mike, stay where you are and keep on signalling," and starts pulling on his gum-boots again I go to the telephone to report that the missing have been spoken. Ralph collects his compass, a lantern, his gun with lots of cartridges for signalling, and sets forth into the night.

If lost hunters would only stay put, they'd be fairly easy to find But they rarely do If they're inexperienced enough to lose themselves in the first place, they're inexperienced enough to get panicky. The thing to do, once you know you are lost, is to find a good, safe place to build a little fire, build it, fire the three shots, light a cigarette and sit down and wait. If the shots aren't answered wait a while till you are sure it's late enough for searchers to be out looking for you and shoot again If you've plenty of shells with you, continue to do so every five minutes; if not, space your volleys further apart or until you hear some-

one shooting for you. But *before* you have used up all your cartridges, resign yourself to a night in the open and make the best of it. They'll be looking for you in the morning—you don't have to worry about that. They'll come shooting, and you'll answer with the cartridges you've carefully saved, and before ten o'clock you'll be back in camp eating bacon and eggs and drinking hot coffee.

This is such a sane and easy program to follow, but no lost hunter that we ever encountered ever followed it. They all do the same thing. They start travelling as fast as they can, usually in the wrong direction and always in circles. I've been lost, and I know the feeling. It is hard to be sensible—not to be driven by a nameless terror and urgency—but you have to be sensible. You can't go ramming around in the woods in the pitch dark. The least serious thing that will happen to you is that you'll become completely exhausted and demoralized. Much worse things can happen. You can fall in a hole and break a leg. You can trip and shoot yourself. One hunter over on B Pond ridge went running through the woods at top speed, smacked into a tree, and knocked himself cold. It's better, even if harder, just to sit down and wait.

The procedure for finding lost hunters is always the same. First comes a period of swearing at anyone dumb enough not to get himself out of the woods before dark. (This phase runs concurrently with the assembling of paraphernalia.) Because we live so near the river, the next thing that Ralph does when he has to go out hunter-hunting, is walk up the road to where it's quiet so he can hear the shots as plainly as possible and determine the direction by compass. Then he fires two answering shots and starts off in that direction and keeps on walking until he hears some more shots. He *re-checks* his direction, finds that the lost one has wandered four points to the northeast, say, corrects his course, fires two more shots, hoping

that they will toll the quarry in his direction, and keeps on walking. This may continue for an hour or it may continue most of the night. The first time it happened it was fairly exciting, but after years of it it has become a nuisance.

In the meanwhile I have kept the tea kettle boiling so that when Ralph gets home, complete with hunter, they can have something hot to drink before going to bed. My inclination, after a half a dozen experiences, is to go hastily to bed as soon as I see their lantern up the road, and let them get their own lunch Six times is enough to hear the same old story, and it always is the same old story.

After the hunting season is over and the lakes have frozen, we can settle down to winter, which consists not of the problem, primarily, of how to keep ourselves amused, but of the much more interesting problem of keeping ourselves warm and fed

The first thing that has to be dealt with is the wood situation. You don't have to ask anyone what he's doing for busy-work from November until January He's getting in his year's supply of firewood What else would he be doing? The wood has to be cut after the leaves have fallen, but before the snow gets too deep and makes it hard to get around in the woods It has to be sawed into four-foot lengths, split, and piled for hauling when the snow gets deep enough. The hauling is usually done with horses and sleds, although we use a car and have to build a road for the purpose. It's amazing how good a road can be built out of brush and snow over the roughest terrain Brush is thrown into the holes and wet snow piled on top. Then it is trodden down and smoothed off. You wouldn't think it would hold up a rabbit, let alone a car or a team of horses and a heavy sled loaded with a couple of cords of hardwood. But as soon as the weather settles down to a steady

cold, the whole thing freezes as solid as a rock. It seems to have the permanence of the Appian Way. I'm always surprised when I run across an old hauling road in summer to find it nothing but a series of skids, brush piles, boulders and deep holes. It seems impossible that we ever rode on it smoothly where now it's difficult even to walk.

We put up eight or ten cords of wood, all of it since the hurricane being blowdown along the Carry Road. That is not an editorial we. Gerrish and Ralph do most of the work, but the proudest moments of my life are those occasions upon which Gerrish sidles up to me at lunch time and mumbles, for fear of hurting Ralph's feelings, "You got time to come out this afternoon and give me a hand? I got an old son of a bitch of an old yellow birch to saw up." You see, I'm a much better hand on a two-man cross-cut saw than Ralph is. Gerrish says I'm better than a lot of professional woodsmen he's worked with. This sounds like frightful bragging, but I don't care. It's really something to brag about.

Excellence on a two-man cross-cut has nothing to do with size and strength. It's wholly a matter of method. A two-man cross-cut is a saw blade four and a half or five feet long with a removable handle at each end. The sawyers take their stances at either end and pull the saw back and forth between them. That sounds easy, and it is easy if you can just remember to saw lightly, lightly, oh, so lightly. Ralph's trouble is that he hates to saw wood and he wants to get it over with as soon as possible; so he bears down on the saw, instinctively, I suppose, since intellectually he knows better. A lot of people who know better do the same thing. It doesn't make the saw cut any faster, and it makes it run an awful lot harder. It makes all the difference between pulling a four-pound weight back and forth or a forty pound. A very common admonition from one sawyer to another in this country is, "Pick up your

feet, will you?" That is probably meaningless to the uninitiate, but a good sawyer resents it very much. It means that his partner is saying that he doesn't mind riding him back and forth with every stroke of the saw, but he does consider it unnecessary to have to drag his feet along the ground, too. It's the obscure local way of telling a man he's bearing down on his end of the saw and it's an implication that he doesn't know his trade.

I don't know how other sawyers manage to retain the fairy touch, but this is how I do it. First I make sure that I'm going to be comfortable, even if this involves shovelling holes in the snow for my feet and lopping off sundry twigs that might switch me in the face. Then I take my end of the saw and pay very close attention to what we're doing for the first inch or so. It's important to start the kerf straight. If it slants or curves appreciably the friction becomes terrible when you get half way through the log. By the time the cut is well started I've got into the swing of the thing and don't have to think about it any more. Particularly do I not think about the fact that we are sawing a log in two.

These are the things I do think about First, I think with satisfaction how good this particular exercise is for the waistline. I can feel the muscles roll and any accumulated ounces of superfluous padding melt away Then I look around the woods and think how lovely they are in winter, with the lavender shadows of the bare trees lying like lace on the snow, and the evergreens standing up black and stiff all around Everything is as still and sharp as an etching in the thin winter sunlight.

About then Gerrish says "Whoa" We have long since agreed that when either of us says "Whoa," we'll finish the stroke we're on and do one more. This gives both our minds a chance to come back from the vacuum they've been wandering in. This whoa of Gerrish's indicates that

we're more than half way through the log and it's time to drive a wedge in the kerf to prevent the saw from being pinched I sit back on my heels while he drives the wedge, and consider taking my top shirt off. Putting up your own wood is certainly the way to get the most heat out of it. It warms you twice—once while you're sawing it and again while you're burning it I take my shirt off and pick up my end of the saw again

Now I think of the deer who will be coming in at night and how glad and surprised they'll be to find a new tree down They can browse all night long in the moonlight on the buds which yesterday were forty feet above their reach We'll see their tracks in the morning. I look at the sawdust that is coming out in little spurts from our kerf with every stroke of the saw If it happens to be a white birch with a red heart, the sawdust is lovely on the snow—pale gold and soft warm rose White birch is the least satisfactory of the hardwoods for firewood, but it makes the prettiest sawdust Firewood's excellence in order is this maple, yellow birch, beech, and white birch. White birch is the most expensive to buy, though. People from the city think it's pretty and romantic, and that puts the price up I'm just thinking about that when the saw drops and we're through the log. Gerrish hasn't had to tell me to pick my feet up, either

After the wood has been cut, rough split, and hauled into our yard, it has to be resawed into stove length and split into two sizes, a large size for the heater and a small size for the kitchen stove The sawing is done by power. We have a circular saw rig, run by a Model T motor that Ralph fished out of the lake and reconditioned. It's certainly a lot more satisfactory than the old-fashioned hand buck saw but I refuse to have anything at all to do with it. It terrifies me. Just the sight of the saw spinning viciously around, its teeth a bright blur in the sunlight, and the

sound of the queer, inhuman rising shriek it gives as it rips through a piece of wood, make the cold shudders run up and down my spine. I'm really and truly afraid of it. It's unreasonable, I know; but some fears lie beyond reason.

I like to help split the wood, though. It's frozen to the core by now, and splits easily. It's fun to stand a chunk—pronounced "junk" here—up on the chopping block, give it a clip with the axe, and watch it explode. Occasionally a knotty piece will give trouble, but the mere fact of reluctance to split puts the whole thing on a personal basis So! you won't, huh? Well, we'll see about that! All right. I don't have to use an axe. I can use a maul, if you're going to be that way. There! Dammit!

It's invigorating to win a fight, even if it's only against a stick of wood.

We're still fussing around with one or another phase of the wood question when Christmas comes along.

Christmas in the woods is much better than Christmas on the Outside. We do exactly what we want to do about it, not what we have to do because the neighbors will think it's funny if we don't; or because of the kids, who will judge our efforts not by their own standards but by the standards set up by the parents of the other kids. We don't have any synthetic pre-Christmas build-up—no shop window displays, no carol singers in department stores, no competition in the matter of lighting effects over front doors. At the intersections where the deer-runs cross the Carry Road, no Santa Clauses ring bells in the interest of charity. We didn't even have a Santa Claus until last year. We thought it would be nice if Rufus grew up knowing who gave him presents and bestowing his gratitude in the proper places. So we had never even mentioned the name of You-know-who However, a visitor at Miller's let him in on the secret, explaining to him that Santa Claus is the man who brings things for little boys.

ufus knew very well that Larry Parsons brings in everything we get from the Outside Q E D, Larry is Santa Claus. He still persists in this belief, which makes him perfectly happy and we hope it does Larry, too.

We don't even have a Christmas tree. It seems a little illy, with hundreds of square miles of fir and spruce, from knee-high babies to giants of eighty feet on all sides of us, to cut one down and bring it into the house It seems almost like vandalism to shake the ice and snow from its branches and hang them with pop-corn strings and cheap tinsel We have our Christmas tree outdoors, for the benefit of the birds, hanging suet and crusts on the branches of one of the trees in the yard.

But we do have Christmas, just the same, and since we are so far from stores and last minute shopping, we have to start planning for it a long time ahead. With no chance to shop for gadgets, we have to make quite a lot of our presents, and the rest we get from what is known here simply as the Mail Order. I give mittens, hand made by me with the initials of the recipient knit into the design across the back These don't cost much over and above my time, and no one in this country ever had too many pairs of mittens. For people who live Outside I try to think up things that they couldn't buy in stores. After all, it would be simple-minded to send out and buy something, have it mailed in here, wrap it up, and send it out to someone who, doubtless, lives almost next door to the store where it was bought.

I make little mittens about an inch long and sew them onto a bright fourteen-inch length of cord, as children's mittens are sewed onto a cord. These are bookmarks, in case you haven't guessed To city people who, I know, have fire-places, I send net bags full of the biggest and best pine cones I can find, to be used as kindling. I make balsam pillows. I know these can be bought at any road-

side stand north of the Maine border. But mine don't have pictures of Indians stamped in ink on cheap pink cotton cloth, along with the excruciating sentiment, "For You I Pine and Balsam." I collect old-fashioned patchwork quilt patterns from any source I can find them, and use them to make my pillow covers. In the old quilts, each unit is usually from twelve to fifteen inches square, and that makes a very good size for a balsam pillow. I make them, naturally, by hand, and they look very simple and expensive. They don't cost very much either. And I do love the names of the old patterns—Star of Bethlehem, Wedding Ring, Flower Garden, Log Cabin. They have a nice homely sound. You can think of a lot of things to make out of nothing, if you have to.

But making presents isn't half of Christmas in the woods. I'll never forget the year the lake didn't even begin to freeze until well after the tenth of December. We'd ordered our Mail Order, and presumably the Andover Post Office was harboring our stuff until someone could go out to get it. Finally, the day before Christmas, it was decided that an expedition should go on foot, get the stuff, and then, if at all possible considering the thin ice, drive it all in in Larry's old Model T which was down at the Arm.

We had living with us then a friend named Rush Rogers. He and Ralph and Edward Miller and Arch Hutchins, who was working for Larry, joined forces and set off down the ice on foot dragging a couple of sleds behind them to haul the stuff in on if the ice proved unsafe for the car. They got to the Arm all right, and from there into Andover was easy in Miller's Outside car

Sure enough, all our stuff—we'd sold a story a short while before and were having a fat Christmas that year—was at the Post Office. In fact, since the Post Office was small and space at a premium during the rush season, our packages were all piled in the front window like a displ

and the population of Andover was standing outside guessing at their contents. The Middle Dam delegation continued on to Rumford, stocked up with groceries and Christmas Cheer, picked up the mail and packages on the way back, and arrived back at the Arm in the afternoon. The mail and supplies filled the Ford to bulging. Arch wedged himself into the driver's seat, Edward stood on the running board to watch the high-piled packages, and Rush and Ralph tied the two sleds behind in single file and sat on them I wish I could have seen them. The sleds were hardly big enough to accommodate their rears, and they had to hunch their knees up under their chins and hang on with both hands for dear life. Arch was driving the old Ford as fast as it would go, snow and ice chips from the chains were flying into their faces, so they couldn't keep their eyes open, and the sleds at the ends of their lines were slewing with terrific swoops. As a final touch they held their bare hunting knives in their teeth so they could cut the sleds loose if the car went through the ice ahead of them. Edward told me later that they were the funniest-looking rig he ever saw

The ice was really too thin to be safe It bent and bowed under the weight of the car, and rolled up ahead of them in long flexible swells. But Arch followed the rules for driving a car on thin ice—keep the doors open, go like hell, and be ready to jump—and they got home all right, only a little late for supper.

Then started one of the most hectic evenings I have ever spent First, everything had to be unpacked; and when the Mail Order packs, it packs, what I mean. Corrugated board, excelsior, paper padding—they certainly give it the works. We decided that Ralph would do the unpacking in the back bedroom, with no lamp. He could see enough by the light through the open door. We didn't want any fire on Christmas Eve, and all that packing material

side stand north of the Maine border. But mine don't have pictures of Indians stamped in ink on cheap pink cotton cloth, along with the excruciating sentiment, "For You I Pine and Balsam." I collect old-fashioned patchwork quilt patterns from any source I can find them, and use them to make my pillow covers. In the old quilts, each unit is usually from twelve to fifteen inches square, and that makes a very good size for a balsam pillow. I make them, naturally, by hand, and they look very simple and expensive. They don't cost very much either. And I do love the names of the old patterns—Star of Bethlehem, Wedding Ring, Flower Garden, Log Cabin. They have a nice homely sound You can think of a lot of things to make out of nothing, if you have to

But making presents isn't half of Christmas in the woods. I'll never forget the year the lake didn't even begin to freeze until well after the tenth of December. We'd ordered our Mail Order, and presumably the Andover Post Office was harboring our stuff until someone could go out to get it. Finally, the day before Christmas, it was decided that an expedition should go on foot, get the stuff, and then, if at all possible considering the thin ice, drive it all in in Larry's old Model T which was down at the Arm.

We had living with us then a friend named Rush Rogers. He and Ralph and Edward Miller and Arch Hutchins, who was working for Larry, joined forces and set off down the ice on foot dragging a couple of sleds behind them to haul the stuff in on if the ice proved unsafe for the car. They got to the Arm all right, and from there into Andover was easy in Miller's Outside car.

Sure enough, all our stuff—we'd sold a story a short while before and were having a fat Christmas that year—was at the Post Office. In fact, since the Post Office was small and space at a premium during the rush season, our packages were all piled in the front window like a display,

through the back room I observed that the brisk breeze had risen to gale velocity I could still see the top of the bureau and of Ralph, but the bed had been drifted under. I held the flashlight while Rush did whatever he had to do We went back into the house and turned on the radio. A very satisfactory rendition of "Holy Night" rewarded us. I re-wrapped Renny's present, decided it looked pretty moth-eaten, undid it, got fresh paper and ribbon, and did it up again.

"Holy Night" changed to "Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem," and I listened with pleasure, wrapping up presents, while Rush started to put together Rufus' bounce horse. As the music came to an end, I woke up to the fact that Ralph had been shouting for some time from the back room. "Hey, Louise! Bring that flashlight of Renny's—"

Before we went to bed that night I had wrapped that darned flashlight nine times I had become a much better flashlight wrapper by midnight than I had been at seven o'clock

At midnight we had some sherry and crackers and cheese Because this was Christmas, Ralph had a raw egg in his sherry—which I think is barbarous—and Rush brought me a magnificent treat—Camembert cheese, which Ralph considers equally barbarous. We were exhausted and silly and we had a lot of fun It was the best Christmas Eve I ever had, in spite of the flashlight.

After Christmas, what we call "the long drag" sets in. One day is very like another. The sun rises late over a snow-covered world. It's worth while to get up, even with the thermometer twenty below zero, to see a winter sunrise The eastern sky flames with red, and the whole world turns rose. The steam, rising from the churning open water of the river, has been freezing all night long on every tiniest twig and spill from the water level to the tops of the tallest trees. Walking down to the kitchen over the

around loose was definitely a fire hazard Rush would assemble all of Rufus' toys that came knocked down—and that year most of them did—but first he had to put the new batteries, which were in the mess somewhere, into the radio so I could hear the Christmas carols.

I would re-wrap packages prettily. I started out with our present to Renny Miller, a five-cell flashlight, which we thought might come in handy for him. A flashlight is an awkward thing to wrap neatly, but I did a fairly good job and went on to the next thing Rush was back of the chimney doing something to the radio wires, and in a minute he said, "Hey, Louise, where's that flashlight of Renny's? Lemme have it a second, will you?" I unwrapped it, let him have it a second, and wrapped it up again.

I'd barely got the bow tied satisfactorily when a yelp came from the back room, "Good-night, there goes a box of blocks! Hey, Louise, lemme have that flashlight of Renny's a second, will you?" I unwrapped it, let Ralph have it a second, and wrapped it up again. The back bedroom, I noted in passing, looked as if a brisk breeze had swept through it I wrapped up the snow gliders we'd got for the two younger Miller children and looked around for Rush. He had disappeared, so this looked like the opportune time to tie up the mittens I'd made him, and the checked wool shirt that was Ralph's present to him. I got out a suitable piece of Christmas paper and some silver cord

Then came a rapping on the window, and in the glow of the lamplight I saw Rush's face, framed in icicles and spruce branches. He didn't look like Father Christmas, though. He looked like a man in distress. "Hey, Louise, I can't see a thing out here by this aerial. Bring out that flashlight of Renny's a minute, will you?" I unwrapped it again—carefully, this time, as the paper was getting a little shabby at the creases—and took it out. In passing

But keeping the paths clear hasn't half the headaches of keeping the road to Middle open for a car. We can't even choose our time for doing that. We start out in the car as soon as it begins snowing as if it meant business. You can always tell A really serious snow starts in with fine flakes, which hiss against the windowpane and sting the face. The wind starts moaning up the river, and first the further ridges, then the nearer, then the trees across the river, disappear in a ghostly pall Probably blizzards start as often at ten o'clock in the morning as at seven o'clock at night, but my impression seems to be that it is always dark when we start out to break out the road Undoubtedly this is a hangover from my first trip

It was cold that evening, I remember—too cold, we thought, to snow We never knew when the sun set; gray afternoon merged slowly into black and starless night. We brought the wood and water in, had supper, fed the dogs, pulled down the shades against the biting cold, and drew up around the lamp with our books. The fire roared softly in the stove, a dog whined in his sleep; outside a tree cracked now and then in the falling temperature. It was a good evening to be inside

Suddenly Ralph said, "Listen to that wind!" We pulled aside the curtains and peered out into the night. At the bottom of each pane of glass was a little line of white, curving up at the ends Even as we looked, the lines thickened and something like a handful of smoke momentarily clouded the glass Ralph dropped his corner of the curtain "Snow," he said, and reached for his gum-boots; "I'll go get the car started You'd better put some wood on the kitchen fire. I'll meet you up at the road."

By the time I had put on my sneakers and mended the fire, Ralph was ready to go He had a cant dog, a couple of shovels, some rope, some empty burlap sacks, and a lantern in the back of the old Model T. I climbed in be-

squeaking snow is like walking through a fabulous wood where all the trees are wrought silver encrusted with diamonds. It's a marvellous sight, all the more breath-taking because it lasts so short a time. As soon as the sun is up and the wind begins to stir, it is gone and the trees stand again in their winter grays and dark greens.

Getting breakfast in winter is something. The kitchen stove won't hold a fire over night, so in the morning everything in the place is frozen—the wood, the water in the pails, the bread, the butter—everything. Everything you touch is colder than ice—the metal pans, the copper on the drain board, the iron of the stove-cover lifter. You learn very quickly not to take your mittens off until the place has had a chance to thaw out. I can get a whole breakfast wearing my mittens. I think it would be very good training for those occupations, such as surgery, for example, which require unusual manual dexterity.

Dusk draws in early in the winter. We come in for the night about four o'clock, light the lamps, and settle down. I know all about the inconveniences of kerosene lamps. You can't tell me a thing about filling them every morning, about trimming the wicks, about keeping the chimneys bright. But they give such a lovely, soft, golden light that it's worth the bother. I love lamplight.

During the short space between sunrise and sunset, there are a lot of things that have to be tended to. There are the daily chores, chief of which is filling the woodboxes, bringing in the water, and shovelling snow. Snow shovelling sounds like a trivial occupation, but it isn't. It's hard work and it's maddening work. The paths and steps have to be shovelled out, but all the time you're doing it, you know in the back of your mind that (a) it'll probably snow again during the night, and (b) if you could only wait until spring, you wouldn't have to do it at all. I get tired just thinking about shovelling snow. I hate futile activity.

be the only woman east of the Rockies who can't drive a car, and I gave an awful heave Out she came and I leaped aboard.

The snow had made three inches while we were fooling around, and any last trace of ruts had vanished. Indeed, it had become hard to tell where earth ended and air began. There was only one thing to do I took the lantern and got out and walked, leading the way. I hadn't thought of it when I decided upon sneakers as the ideal winter-foot gear, but this was a place where they were of unparalleled value No one else could have felt the ruts with the soles of their feet I walked along one rut, making a track that Ralph could keep a wheel in. That was all he needed to keep him on the road. We made Middle all right—everyone there was in bed—turned around and started home again The return trip was comparatively easy Our own tracks were still faintly visible

We went down to the kitchen, made some coffee, drank it, ate a doughnut apiece, stoked the fire and started out again It was after eleven o'clock, and snowing harder than ever We fell off the road three times, and on the return trip the car dragged in the middle all the way. We drank some more coffee, ate some more doughnuts, and set out again This time we were piling up so much snow with the front of the car that we both got out, and stumbled and slid a hundred feet up the middle of the road to break down the crown, came back and rode the distance we had walked, and repeated the performance, until we saw Miller's back pasture gate in front of us. Then we shovelled out a place to turn around in and came home It was after three o'clock by then, and neither of us could remember a time in our lives when we hadn't breathed snow, and had snow down our necks, up our sleeves, in our faces, and most especially dragging at our feet And it was still snowing, and we had to keep on

side him and we started off. It really didn't seem to me that this was necessary. Only about an inch of snow had fallen so far, and it was crisp and mealy. Why didn't we wait awhile?

I found out. As soon as we got out of the shelter of the buildings, the road vanished. Everything vanished The headlights showed us only a thick white wall that swayed in the wind, and pretty soon we couldn't even see that. I got out onto the running board and scraped the windshield clean, and we went a few more rods. Then I repeated the performance, and we went on again. It was just like living and trying to work in a heavy, smothering black bag I hadn't the faintest idea where we were. None of the trees along the side of the road looked familiar. Even our voices sounded odd and muffled. We must be, I thought, about halfway by now. I got out to see if I could find the ruts, and sensed rather than saw something even blacker than the surrounding blackness off to the left. It was the wangan We'd come only a third of a mile..

Halfway up Wangan Hill we fell off the road. The front left wheel went down with a sickening slump, the rear wheels raced, and there we were We didn't say anything. We didn't have to. We just lighted the lantern and got out to look. The bottom of the car was resting on the frozen snow shoulder of the road, and neither of the rear wheels had traction. We had to dig the pan and axles free and get her back into the ruts somehow We did Don't ask how. I don't know. All I remember is lying for what seemed like hours on my stomach with snow drifting over me, scraping away at that frozen shoulder Then I remember shoving for dear life while Ralph gave her the gas. I remember also Ralph's giving me a little lecture on the asininity of anyone my age not being able to drive a car. If I could drive and he might shove, then we might get some place. This annoyed me, as I do feel like a fool to

It could have been worse. It was less than a mile home. We could have had to walk all the way from the Parsons' front door. We blew out the lantern and started home through the first beginnings of a beautiful clear dawn

On foot for the rest of the winter! That's where we always end Sometimes we're on foot in December, and again we manage to keep the wheels rolling until February, but sooner or later we have to get down the snowshoes from their pegs on the porch and start walking the mail

When we first came to live here, mail was definitely catch as catch can The Post Office at Coburn's is a summer office, open only from May 15th until October 1st, and before and after those dates, Middle Dam ceased to exist as far as the Government was concerned. If anyone happened to be going Outside, he took the community letters and brought in whatever postal matter the Andover Post Office had been storing for us Sometimes we got mail every week In the dead of winter or when conditions were bad we were lucky if we got it twice a month. Now, however, we have a Star Route to Middle Dam, and we get mail every Tuesday and Friday. It's wonderful for everyone, except possibly Larry, who is the mail carrier. There are times, I imagine, when he'd just as soon stay home as go trekking off down the lake with what he sometimes refers to as "the Ghrutly mail" It's all right while the boat is still running, or after the lake is frozen and he can use his snowboat—an ingenious device that looks like a Black Maria, with skis in place of the front wheels and caterpillar treads behind to furnish the driving power But in between times he has to carry the sacks around the shore on foot, and that's something else again. The first year he was mail carrier Ralph had two great over-size tires come for the Big Green "Mormon," and, of course, they arrived

making these ghastly expeditions into uncharted space. We set out again.

I can't remember whether this trip, or the next, or the next, was our last. They all blur into one long eon of wallowing and pushing and shovelling, of roaring motors and spinning rear wheels and boiling radiators, of blowing snow and moaning wind, of brief periods in the warmth and light of the kitchen, of scalding coffee, of changing soaked mittens and socks for mittens and socks not quite so wet, and of wishing first that I could go home and go to bed, and, along toward the last, that I could just go to bed under the nearest bush. Somewhere along there, though, we found ourselves standing beside the Ford, tacitly acknowledging that we were licked. We'd shovelled and we'd pushed. We'd practically willed her along the last quarter mile, when she'd been out of the ruts more often than she'd been in. The snow was just too mealy to provide traction, and now it was just too deep to plow through. The last inch had been our undoing, and now we might as well drag ourselves home and go to bed. Ralph drained the radiator The Ford would keep until spring just where she sat.

I looked around. I could see a little now The woods were getting, not lighter, but a little less solidly black. I could see a gray smear running away in two directions from where we stood That would be the road I could see strange humps and fantastic figures that were trees standing around us in the thinning snow. Yes, thinning. The flakes were falling much slower now They were big and feathery, and lacked the vicious drive they'd had all night. The storm was definitely letting up. We took one more look at the car, and Ralph shook his head It was just too late to make any difference. We were on foot now until spring. We might as well accept it

"Where are we, anyhow?" I asked.

gets me nowhere That's the sort of footling conjecture that I indulge in while walking the mail.

Another great source of entertainment on these mail walks is the tracks in the snow. Sometimes they are just tracks—the clear-cut, chiseled hoof marks of deer, a rabbit's big, spreading pad-marks, with a little dent behind them where its maker squatted in the snow, or the precise line of prints left by a trotting fox. Sometimes they tell of tragedy. You follow the delicate embroidery of a wood-mouse's trail for a quarter of a mile, and then it ends like the snipping off of a thread Two feathery swept places in the snow, where the wings of an owl brushed as he swooped, tell why. Or you may come to a churned-up, blood-stained spot, with the tracks of a rabbit and a wildcat leading into it, but only the wildcat's tracks leading out. You don't have to have a dictionary to translate that story. Once in a while we see a bear track, but not often The bears ought to be, and usually are, sleeping somewhere in the winter.

Actually, the only track that has the power to startle us very much is the track of man We fancy that we know about where everyone belonging to Middle Dam is, at any given hour of the day or night. Moreover, if anyone comes down the Carry Road, it's usually to see us There isn't any other place to go, in winter So if nobody has stopped at the house, and yet here's this track on the road—well! It couldn't be any of the Millers They're all working on their wood It can't be Larry. He doesn't wear L. L. Bean gum-boots, and only Bean boots have this chain tread It might be Dorian, who works for Larry He was talking last week of getting some new boots But he's supposed to be sawing ice. Maybe it's one of the company timber cruisers, come in from the Outside. Or maybe it's the game warden. Or maybe— It doesn't strike us as odd at all that we have so changed our way of living from that in which we were

during the freeze-up. Ralph told Larry he was in no hurry for them and to leave them at the Arm until the ice was safe, but Larry is too conscientious for his own good He carried and rolled them all the way up from the Arm. That's the kind of a guy Larry is.

On Mondays and Thursdays, then, one of us has to walk to Middle to take up the out-going mail, and again on Tuesdays and Fridays, someone has to go up to bring down the in-coming I myself don't mind the trip, even on, snowshoes, those inventions of the devil. It isn't like breaking a trail through fresh snow. We take pains to tramp down a good, wide, level float up the middle of the road, and in between storms this float is packed so hard that we can sometimes go all the way bare-foot. Bare-foot, I probably don't have to explain, is simply woods for "without skis or snowshoes" It's nice to get away from the house for a while and to visit Al Parsons and Alice Miller, and there's always a lot to think about and look at along the road There are the woods themselves, which I like better in winter than in summer, because I like the type of design that emphasizes line rather than mass. The bare branches of the hardwood trees look exactly like etchings. There are strange vistas of hill and pond which the foliage blocks out in summer, and which therefore have a rare, new appeal, like glimpses into a far and beautiful country. The view through the bare tree tops from the top of Birch Hill might be a Swiss view, I decide, and the deep black slash between the ranges where the Arm stretches south through its narrowing valley might be a Norwegian fjord. Then I wonder why we all like to pretend that we're somebody else, somewhere else Why is it more fun to think I'm a Norse woman looking over a fjord than to admit I'm me looking over into South Arm? Probably, because part of being me, looking into South Arm, lies in pretending I'm a Norse woman? This is very involved and

snow that covers the lake after the first of the year is very slow. So in order to speed it up, the snow must be scraped off the cutting area. A couple of below-zero nights after the ice is clear will do the trick. Then the ice field has to be scored for the cutting lines like a pan of fudge, with a tool that looks like an old-fashioned spike harrow with the spikes set sixteen inches apart. Then the cutting begins.

The cutting used to be done with a hand ice-saw, until Larry decided that that was unprogressive. He got hold of a machinist on the Outside who dreamed up an ice-cutting machine for him. This consists of an old Model A motor on steel runners, with a chain-driven circular saw out in front and a handle like a baby carriage handle out behind. The operator walks behind, pushing the rig and raising and lowering the saw as desired. The scored grooves in the ice act as guides for the runners. This ought to have been much easier and faster than hand sawing; and it would have been, if, instead of sawing ahead in a straight line, the thing hadn't inexplicably insisted on sawing backward in a circle. Ice sawing was suspended until the creator could be brought in to take the bugs out of his darling. He came in one week end, toiled long and earnestly, and left Sunday night with assurances that everything was going to be all right now.

Monday morning ice cutting was resumed. Larry drove his reconditioned labor saver the length of the ice field, parked it for a moment while he organized the hauling and storing brigades, and turned back just in time to see what happened. Ralph was at Middle at the time, and saw it, too. He says it was one of the most impressive sights he ever witnessed.

Larry had unwittingly left the ice cutter on the edge of a triangular floe of free ice, formed by two accidental and invisible cracks and the open water alongside of which he had been sawing. It was a big floe of a thousand squar

brought up, that bear and deer and wildcat tracks are all in the day's walk, while a stray human boot-print throws us into a dither.

But that's not all of walking the mail. After we get to Middle there are people to see and talk to. There are all the Millers and both the Parsons, and whoever is working for the Parsons at the time. They may be doing almost anything, but whatever they're doing, it's worth while stopping to watch. Al will probably be sewing or cooking. She's one of the busiest people I ever saw. She's never sewing ordinary things. She runs a gift shop in the summer, for the benefit of Coburn's sports, and she'll be making a very trick apron, or a particularly useful laundry bag. If she's cooking, it won't be just cake and pie and cookies. It will be doughnuts that contain orange juice and grated rind instead of milk and spice—a very tasty dish, by the way—or a spice cake, the basis of which is canned tomato soup, or coconut-chocolate candy, made largely of leftover mashed potato She gets around among the pages of the women's magazines, all right

If it's right after New Year's, all the men of Middle Dam will probably be cutting ice Cutting ice is a man-sized chore. Over two thousand cakes have to be got in for the hotel, so-called, and on top of that there's Larry's own personal ice and Miller's ice Then they branch out. They go up into the Narrows and fill the ice houses of a couple of summer camps up there, and they fill Mrs Graves' ice house at the Arm. It's a lot of work, and more involved than would seem at first glance.

First of all, they have to arrange to have the ice the right thickness, a matter that can't be left to Nature alone. This is one of those cases of circumvention The ice, during the first part of January, is about a foot thick, and that isn't quite thick enough. Before spring it may be three feet thick, but freezing under the insulating blanket of

has to have the general nature of a lumber camp described to him. Literature and the movies have done that quite adequately. They haven't shown, however, what it means to be neighbors to a lumber camp, to have as the boon companions of one's four-year-old son a bunch of the hardest and toughest teamsters, sawyers, border-jumpers and general roustabouts that ever came down a tote road; to find that one is suddenly confronted with a choice of stopping talking or learning an entirely new language—a language consisting of such terms as "bucking up on the landing," "sluiced his team" and "shaking out the road hay." Being what I am, I chose to learn the new language.

I also had to learn to differentiate between a day man, a stump cutter and a member of a yarding crew. A day man gets paid by the day and does whatever the boss tells him to. He may cut firewood, swamp out roads, pile up brush and tops, anything. A stump cutter is an individualist. He works alone, felling his own trees, limbing them out, sawing them up into four-foot lengths, piling the pieces neatly for the convenience of the scaler, and getting paid by the cord. He's usually pretty good. That's why he works alone. He can make more money that way than he could at day rate or by pooling his ability with that of someone else. Sometimes, however, he's hard to get along with and no one else will work with him. A yarding crew consists of three men and a twitch horse. One of the men cuts down the trees and limbs them, one drives the twitch horse, dragging—or "twitching"—the entire trunk of the tree to a cleared space called a yard, where the third man saws it up with a buck saw and piles it. A good yarding crew can cut and pile an awful lot of wood in a day.

Besides these classifications of woodsmen, who comprise the main population of the camp and who sleep in a long low bunk-house, there are several specialists. There's the boss and the straw boss, who have their own little

feet or more of ice—too big to be noticeable to a man just walking across it. But it wasn't too big to be affected by the weight of the machine bearing down on its edge. As they looked the point of the triangle rose majestically, and the opposite side dipped. The ice cutter clung for a moment and then started slipping into the lake. It was the slow-motion quality of the thing that made it so impressive. The whole works just hung for a long moment. Then the cutter disappeared into twenty feet of icy water, and the floe settled slowly back The lake stretched without blemish two miles to the further shore.

They got it out later all right, and sent it out to be overhauled. It's still there, and they're still cutting ice with a hand ice-saw at Middle Dam

They had some trouble putting the ice in at the Arm one year, too. When a cake of ice has been cut free, naturally it floats and can be hauled up out of the water, loaded on a sled, and taken up to the ice house The first cake they cut from the ice field at the Arm didn't float, though. It disappeared, leaving a hole So did the next. Larry stuck his head down the hole to see what went on. He found that he and his men and horses were standing on a sixteen-inch piecrust of solid blue ice, over some three feet of air, with another layer of ice below The lake had dropped three feet after the top layer had frozen and the lower level had frozen subsequently Ordinarily the ice would follow the water down, but the ice was so thick it just arched to the shore instead Larry was relieved to know that the laws of natural science hadn't suddenly been revolutionized. All the same the situation was annoying One man had to crawl down into the air space and lift up the pieces as they were sawed so they could be hoisted to the top. It was a nasty, cold, cramping job Nature can think up simply abominable little tricks to pull off unexpectedly.

Some winters we have lumber camps in here. Nobody

room, aside from simple requests to pass the butter, please. And I mean "please." I've eaten a lot of meals in lumber camps and I've been amazed at the prevalence of "please" and "thank you." I wish my own family were always so punctilious. The other reason for no talking is that the cook doesn't want the men dawdling over their meals. A large percentage of our woodsmen are Canadian Frenchmen, and they can't talk without gesticulating. This means they would have to put down their tools and stop eating, which would slow up the meal considerably. The cook contends that they can do their talking somewhere else. All he wants them to do is eat and get out, so his cookees can get on with their dishes.

Somewhere high on the social scale comes the blacksmith. He sometimes lives with the boss, sometimes with the clerk, and sometimes with the men, depending on his type. He makes the sleds that are used to haul the wood, keeps the horses shod, repairs tools, and is usually an amateur veterinary besides. He and the feeder—woods for stableman—are responsible for the health of the horses, but if anything beyond their ability arises, they take the responsibility of calling a real vet. The feeder waters and feeds the horses, cleans the stable, and keeps an eye on the pigs. Every lumber camp has five or six pigs. They are brought in in the fall, cute little tricks with curly tails, fed all winter on the tons of excellent garbage that are the inevitable by-product of catering to a hundred men or more, and sent out in the spring to be slaughtered. By that time they are simply enormous.

Every lumber camp also has cats. In the fall the cook brings in a cat to keep the kitchen free of mice and the stable free of rats that come in in the bales of hay. It is always a female cat. If I didn't know our Tom, I'd be inclined to believe the flat statement of an old friend, Beatty Balestier—yes, Kipling's brother-in-law, but he'd kill you

shack, not because they feel exclusive, but because the men like to sit around their bunk-house in the evening and bellyache about the weather, the food, the administration of the camp, or the way the trees grow, or any one of a thousand other things. The presence of authority would put a definite damper on this favorite of all indoor sports. And while talk is cheap, like other cheap things—air and water, for example—it is invaluable. A man who has cursed the boss all evening to his confreres is almost always a man who goes to bed feeling at peace with the world, and who wakes up ready to put out a good day's work. So the boss lives in his own little hut, dropping over occasionally to join in the poker game that runs continually from supper to bed-time and all day Sunday.

In another little hut, known as the Office, live the clerk and scaler. The scaler, as his name implies, scales the wood for the men. That is, he estimates with the aid of a long marked rule called a scale rule the quantity each man cuts, keeps a record of the scale for the landowners, and reports each man's cut to the clerk, who pays the man accordingly. The clerk keeps the camp books, pays the men, orders supplies, tends the wangan—the little store where tobacco, candy, clothes, saw-blades and axes are sold—and runs the punch board, which is always a part of the camp picture. The clerk and scaler are men of at least some education, and I think they enjoy living alone, because they like to sit up nights and read, and in the bunk-house lights have to be out at nine o'clock.

Behind a partition in the kitchen, which is also the dining-room, and which is by law a separate building, live the cook and his cookees, or helpers. They don't mingle much with the rest of the camp. They're too busy, for one thing. For another they have their discipline to maintain. If arguments start they're apt to start in the dining-room. That's one reason why no talking is allowed in the dining-

in the woods who didn't treat me with complete respect and friendliness—and I've met a lot of lumberjacks What they do Outside, I neither know nor care.

Sometimes, though, we get indications that some individual's conduct before he crossed our ken might not bear the most rigid inspection This was true, we gathered, of one of Rufus' bosom pals, a big part-Indian named Tony. Tony looked like a ruffian, and was sweet He rode Rufus on his horse, stopped in the yard to play with him, took him on walks and brought him presents, like partridge feathers or a length of chain carved out of a single piece of wood I used to worry about these friendships of Rufus' —for Tony was only one of many. After all Rufus was only four and some queer customers do get loose in the woods I suppose it was the stock maternal stewing Ralph told me not to worry, and after a while I came to believe him I'm glad I did The risk was negligible, I know now, and what Rufus gained in knowledge and poise was considerable.

Then one day the feeder came down to the house at noon simply bursting with excitement. "We got a G-Man, Mis' Rich," he announced, as one would announce the outbreak of a rare and fatal disease And sure enough, an F B I agent had walked into camp from Upton—a long, hard walk but you know the F B I—looking for some man. The man had been there, but had left the week before (I don't know, to keep the record straight, what he was wanted for, or whether they ever caught him.) So the G-Man had some lunch and walked out again. He wasn't in camp more than an hour But the fact that he came at all was enough

When the cutting is a mile or more from camp, some of the men carry their lunches with them rather than walk clear in and back again Tony was one of these. But the man that worked with him preferred to walk back for a hot lunch. He came back to the job that afternoon and

if you mentioned it. Beatty told me once when I was trying to locate a tom kitten, "There's no such thing. All cats are female cats, and all kittens are the result of immaculate conception." My observation of lumber camp cats inclines me to believe he had a tenable argument there. But be that as it may, by spring every lumber camp within a radius of ten miles of us has at least a dozen cats—the original and three litters. All the kittens, regardless of their mother's complexion, are black and white. No wonder Tom is such a smuggy.

When a lumber camp first moves in, all the men look alike to me. They're all big and tough-looking and most of them need a shave, which they won't get all winter. They all dress more or less alike, in layers of shabby sweaters and shirts, ragged pants, and wool caps. They all walk along the road with the same swagger, carrying their axes and saws over their shoulders, swearing at their twitch horses, and dropping their eyes upon meeting me. After a while I begin to get them sorted out and those that I meet regularly I start speaking to. The first time I do this the same thing always happens. The man starts obviously, raises his eyes to look at me, looks all around to see if by any chance I mean a couple of other guys, and looks back at me. Then his face lights up in the warmest and friendliest of smiles, and he answers. If he can't speak English, he answers in French or Russian or Finnish. It doesn't make any difference. We both know what we mean.—"Hello, stranger. I'll never get to know you very well. We haven't much in common, but we're both here on this snowy road, with the woods all around us. Stranger, I wish you well." They do wish me well, too. Lumberjacks have a reputation, I know, for being brawlers and roisterers and general trouble-makers, and I guess when they are on the Outside, with their systems full of rot-gut, they often deserve this reputation. But I have never met a lumberjack

in the woods who didn't treat me with complete respect and friendliness—and I've met a lot of lumberjacks What they do Outside, I neither know nor care.

Sometimes, though, we get indications that some individual's conduct before he crossed our Ken might not bear the most rigid inspection This was true, we gathered, of one of Rufus' bosom pals, a big part-Indian named Tony. Tony looked like a ruffian, and was sweet. He rode Rufus on his horse, stopped in the yard to play with him, took him on walks and brought him presents, like partridge feathers or a length of chain carved out of a single piece of wood. I used to worry about these friendships of Rufus' —for Tony was only one of many After all Rufus was only four and some queer customers do get loose in the woods. I suppose it was the stock maternal stewing Ralph told me not to worry and after a while I came to believe him. I'm glad I did The risk was negligible, I know now, and what Rufus gained in knowledge and poise was considerable.

Then one day the feeder came down to the house at noon simply bursting with excitement. "We got a G-Man, Mis' Rich," he announced, as one would announce the outbreak of a rare and fatal disease. And sure enough, an F B I agent had walked into camp from Upton—a long, hard walk, but you know the F.B I —looking for some man The man had been there, but had left the week before. (I don't know to keep the record straight, what he was wanted for, or whether they ever caught him.) So the G-Man had some lunch and walked out again. He wasn't in camp more than an hour But the fact that he came at all was enough.

When the cutting is a mile or more from camp, some of the men carry their lunches with them rather than walk clear in and back again Tony was one of these But the man that worked with him preferred to walk back for a hot lunch He came back to the job that afternoon and

if you mentioned it. Beatty told me once when I was trying to locate a tom kitten, "There's no such thing. All cats are female cats, and all kittens are the result of immaculate conception." My observation of lumber camp-cats inclines me to believe he had a tenable argument there. But be that as it may, by spring every lumber camp within a radius of ten miles of us has at least a dozen cats—the original and three litters. All the kittens, regardless of their mother's complexion, are black and white. No wonder Tom is such a smuggy.

When a lumber camp first moves in, all the men look alike to me. They're all big and tough-looking and most of them need a shave, which they won't get all winter. They all dress more or less alike, in layers of shabby sweaters and shirts, ragged pants, and wool caps. They all walk along the road with the same swagger, carrying their axes and saws over their shoulders, swearing at their twitch horses, and dropping their eyes upon meeting me. After a while I begin to get them sorted out and those that I meet regularly I start speaking to. The first time I do this the same thing always happens. The man starts obviously, raises his eyes to look at me, looks all around to see if by any chance I mean a couple of other guys, and looks back at me. Then his face lights up in the warmest and friendliest of smiles, and he answers. If he can't speak English, he answers in French or Russian or Finnish. It doesn't make any difference. We both know what we mean:—"Hello, stranger. I'll never get to know you very well. We haven't much in common, but we're both here on this snowy road, with the woods all around us. Stranger, I wish you well." They do wish me well, too. Lumberjacks have a reputation, I know, for being brawlers and roisterers and general trouble-makers, and I guess when they are on the Outside, with their systems full of rot-gut, they often deserve this reputation. But I have never met a lumber-

floors were warmer, or the lice less numerous. But most of all, they like to talk per-onalities. In short they like to gossip They'll take the fact that a man changed his underwear in the middle of the week instead of waiting until Sunday, the conventional underwear-changing day, and make almost an international incident out of it. It's fascinating to observe

Occasionally there's something worth talking about. Once in a great while someone goes crazy and tries to kill himself or someone else. That's good for a month's talk. Once Rufus got lost, and I, in desperation, called up and asked the clerk if anyone there had seen him. Every man available set out to look He was finally discovered about five hundred yards from the tar paper shack where the horses are taken to eat their noon-day meals; or as the man who found him said, "About two and a half good twitches." A good twitch is the distance a horse can drag a full-length pulp log without resting Distances are frequently measured in twitches or fractions thereof by woodsmen It's a habit I've got into myself.

This search for Rufus furnished talk for a week. Once a big Swede known as Bow (pronounced as in bow-wow, which is what his brother is called, incidentally) decided to relieve the monotony by putting a set-line through the hole in the ice where the horses were watered at lunch time, and catching himself some fish. The fact that if the game warden had caught him, he'd have probably spent the rest of the winter in jail only added spice to the venture For days he tended his line night and morning and never caught a thing Then one evening his luck changed. There was something—a considerable something—down in the water at the end of his line. His shouts brought the whole camp onto the ice in time to witness the landing of the fish It was fish all right—a can of salmon with the label

told Tony that there was a G-Man in camp. Tony went on with his work but kept deep in the spruce thickets along the back of the cut. When knocking-off time came, he turned his horses loose, with a slap on their rumps to get them started, and let them go into camp, alone—a thing they always did, anyhow. He, himself, didn't go home to supper. He stayed up on the mountain-side, hungry and all alone in the cold and dark until the middle of the night. Then he sneaked into camp and snatched a few hours' sleep. The next morning, bright and early, he was at my kitchen door to say good-bye to Rufus I didn't recognize him, at first. He'd shaved off the luxuriant beard he'd been nursing along all winter. He didn't know where he was going, he told me cheerfully. He was just going.

These seemed, and still seem to me, to be over-elaborate precautions for complete innocence to take. I still wonder sometimes what Tony had on his conscience.

This visit of the G-Man and Tony's oddly coincidental flight were a source of discussion all the rest of the winter. Nothing is so prized in the woods as a good juicy morsel to hash over. Here is a community of men, practically cut off from the world Most of them can't read They have but one thing in common—work They have to talk about something and they'll talk about anything They'll talk about the number of birds that flew out of a thicket, or the deer they saw eating road-hay—the hay spread on icy places in the hauling roads to prevent loaded sleds from overrunning the horses—or the super-intelligence of their own twitch horse. They'll talk about the snow, which is damned for hindering the cutting, or lack of snow, which is damned for hindering hauling They'll talk about the food—it was always better at the last camp they were in—or the shelter. That was always better, too. The roof was either higher, permitting better ventilation and air circulation, or lower, conserving heat; or else the

floors were warmer, or the lice less numerous. But most of all, they like to talk personalities. In short they like to gossip. They'll take the fact that a man changed his underwear in the middle of the week instead of waiting until Sunday, the conventional underwear-changing day, and make almost an international incident out of it. It's fascinating to observe.

Occasionally there's something worth talking about. Once in a great while someone goes crazy and tries to kill himself or someone else. That's good for a month's talk. Once Rufus got lost, and I, in desperation, called up and asked the clerk if anyone there had seen him. Every man available set out to look. He was finally discovered about five hundred yards from the tar paper shack where the horses are taken to eat their noon-day meals; or as the man who found him said, "About two and a half good twitches." A good twitch is the distance a horse can drag a full-length pulp log without resting. Distances are frequently measured in twitches or fractions thereof by woodsmen. It's a habit I've got into myself.

This search for Rufus furnished talk for a week. Once a big Swede known as Bow (pronounced as in bow-wow, which is what his brother is called, incidentally) decided to relieve the monotony by putting a set-line through the hole in the ice where the horses were watered at lunch time, and catching himself some fish. The fact that if the game warden had caught him, he'd have probably spent the rest of the winter in jail only added spice to the venture. For days he tended his line night and morning and never caught a thing. Then one evening his luck changed. There was something—a considerable something—down in the water at the end of his line. His shouts brought the whole camp onto the ice in time to witness the landing of the fish. It was fish all right—a can of salmon with the label

told Tony that there was a G-Man in camp. Tony went on with his work but kept deep in the spruce thickets along the back of the cut. When knocking-off time came, he turned his horses loose, with a slap on their rumps to get them started, and let them go into camp, alone—a thing they always did, anyhow He, himself, didn't go home to supper. He stayed up on the mountain-side, hungry and all alone in the cold and dark until the middle of the night. Then he sneaked into camp and snatched a few hours' sleep. The next morning, bright and early, he was at my kitchen door to say good-bye to Rufus. I didn't recognize him, at first. He'd shaved off the luxuriant beard he'd been nursing along all winter He didn't know where he was going, he told me cheerfully. He was just going.

These seemed, and still seem to me, to be over-elaborate precautions for complete innocence to take. I still wonder sometimes what Tony had on his conscience.

This visit of the G-Man and Tony's oddly coincidental flight were a source of discussion all the rest of the winter. Nothing is so prized in the woods as a good juicy morsel to hash over. Here is a community of men, practically cut off from the world Most of them can't read They have but one thing in common—work They have to talk about something and they'll talk about anything. They'll talk about the number of birds that flew out of a thicket, or the deer they saw eating road-hay—the hay spread on icy places in the hauling roads to prevent loaded sleds from overrunning the horses—or the super-intelligence of their own twitch horse They'll talk about the snow, which is damned for hindering the cutting, or lack of snow, which is damned for hindering hauling They'll talk about the food—it was always better at the last camp they were in—or the shelter. That was always better, too The roof was either higher, permitting better ventilation and air circulation, or lower, conserving heat; or else the

from them can just as well be made from corn stalks. On the whole, I'd just as soon that the lumber camps went somewhere else.

On the other hand, there are nice things about them. It's nice to have not-too-close neighbors once in a while. But the thing I enjoy most about them is a perfectly silly and inconsequential thing. Our winter bedroom is right next to the road, and I like to hear the men and the horses going to work before we get up. Once in a while a man will whistle or sing, but mostly they go quietly, with only the jingle of a chain, the blowing of the horses, and the squeak of the frozen snow to mark their going. The whole thing doesn't last fifteen minutes, and it really isn't anything to get starry-eyed about. I just like it, that's all.

Winter, to look forward to, is a long, dark, dreary time. To live, it's a time of swirling blizzards and heavenly high blue and white days, of bitter cold and sudden thaws; of hard work outdoors and long, lamp-lit evenings; of frost patterns on the windows and the patterns of deer tracks in the snow. It's the time you expected to drag intolerably, and once in a while you stop and wonder when the drag is going to begin. Next week, you warn yourself, after we've finished doing this job on hand, we'd better be prepared for a siege of boredom. But somehow next week never comes. There's always something to keep it at bay.

Then one day there's a patch of bare ground on a sunny slope, the dog starts going wild with the smell of spring, and someone says that the break-up ought to come early this year. The break-up! But Good Heavens, the lakes only froze up a couple of weeks ago. Well, a little more than that, maybe. Let's see— Why, it's time to tap the maple trees and overhaul the cars and clean house! The next thing you know, the smelts are running and the loons have come back into the growing patch of open water in the Pond-in-the-River. There's an ant hill in the flower garden

still adhering, in case proof were needed. They're still talking about that, in the woods.

Sunday is the day of leisure in a lumber camp. That's the day the men do their washing, file their saws and sharpen their axes, get their hair cut, and attend to any other odd personal jobs. It's horse-shoeing day, too, except in emergencies. Sometimes the blacksmith lets Rufus "help" by holding the horse's foot for him. This is a great treat for Rufus, but considerably less of a treat for the blacksmith, I would think. What the horses' views are, I have no way of knowing. Sunday afternoon is recreation time. Then the big stud poker game really gets going, and the Russians and Poles start their interminable gloomy hands of *spadowiecz*, a game completely incomprehensible to non-Slav. Then if the ice is good, the athletically inclined join Ralph and Rufus and me in skating on the Pond in the cove where we keep our boat in summertime. We can't skate for sour apples, but neither can anybody else, so we all have a lot of fun and make a lot of noise falling around on the ice. Then those who can carve, work on their ornamental bottle stoppers and birds in cages, mysteriously cut out of a single block of wood. Then those that are big enough and tough enough to get away with it knit on socks and sweaters.

I never can quite make up my mind whether I like to have the lumber camps move in or not. I really like it best when we're here alone. I've heard enough of the popular Freudian lingo that people in general sling around so carelessly to know that I am no victim of agoraphobia. I like to know that I have miles of unpopulated space around me. The lumber camps don't bother me, but I know they are there. Worse, I know they are cutting down the trees. I feel a great regard for trees; they represent age and beauty and the miracles of life and growth. I don't like to see them destroyed, especially as the cellulose made

think it's very wise to spend two hours waxing the living-room floor on a lovely day when I could be out fishing. If I say this often enough and fast enough, I can convince myself that almost no effort beyond attending to the bare necessities of food, clothing, and shelter is really required of me

We do have to eat. That I will concede. So I spend a large proportion of my housekeeping time in getting ready to cook, cooking, and recovering from cooking. It makes me tired just to think about it

This is supposed to be the Independent Life, but as far as getting supplies goes, we're dependent on quite a number of things, ranging from Larry Parsons to the weather. Except during the short summer months, Larry is the one who goes to Rumford and hauls our supplies in by car and boat, and whether or not he goes depends on the weather, the state of the lake, and how much else he has to do. Once Larry goes, whether I have the ingredients to cook what I want to cook, or must, instead, cook what I have the ingredients for, depends on how bright or dull we were while making out the supply list. We try to put in supplies for a week at a time in the summer, and for a month or more, at a time, in the winter In making out a list of that length, it's very easy to leave off two or three items that are absolutely essential There is no way of rectifying these errors Once a thing is forgotten, it's forgotten until next time Then you find to your surprise that a lot of things you thought were essential aren't essential at all It's very enlightening

Try to make a list of all the groceries you're going to be needing for the next four weeks Go ahead It won't cost you anything You aren't in my boots If you leave off eggs, you won't have to go without, as we do Remember that fresh fruit, meat, and vegetables won't keep forever, and plan accordingly, listing canned goods for the last part of

and a dandelion blossom up by the road. Gerrish has begun talking about a good mess of dandelion greens, cooked with salt pork. It's time to clean up the vegetable garden and paint the boats, and the consensus is that the ice will be out by next Tuesday.

Next Tuesday!

Where has the winter gone?

IV



"Isn't Housekeeping Difficult?"

No. Housekeeping in the woods is—for me—not at all difficult. I'd like to let that statement stand unqualified, testimony to my enormous efficiency and energy. Too many people know the truth about me, though, to make that advisable. The truth is that under the most favorable circumstances—circumstances including linoleum floors, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, and automatic water heating systems—I would still be a rotten housekeeper. My friends would indulgently call me a little bit careless, and my enemies would label me down-right slovenly. My enemies would be the nearer right

Here I can be a rotten housekeeper, and it doesn't make much difference. After all, this is the woods. People don't expect quite so much in the line of shining silver, polished glass, and spotless woodwork I can, with a clear conscience—or fairly clear, anyhow—ignore a lot of persnickety details. I can be sensible about these things. I can refuse to allow myself to become the slave of a dustpan and brush. I have learned, because I've had to, to spend money wisely. Now I am learning to spend my time wisely; and I don't

because the ice isn't safe to cross but is too thick to put a boat through. Cold weather, though, isn't an unmixed curse. When it really gets cold, with a cold you can depend on not to waver, then you can stop vilifying the temperature and begin to use it. You can make ice-cream, for example, following any good recipe and putting it outdoors in a pan to freeze. This involves running out every half hour or so, to stir the custard and scrape what has frozen away from the sides, but it's worth the bother to me. I've loved ice-cream from my childhood, when a cone was an event. I still love it enough not to be too bitter about the fact that here in the woods we almost never can have it in summer, when the weather is hot, but must wait until the time of year when scalding soup and hot buttered rum would be the reasonable man's choice.

The important use of cold, though, is to keep food. Early in December we buy a case of butter—thirty-two pounds—and freeze it. This will last us until spring and the final pound is exactly as sweet and fresh as the first was. We buy meat in quantities and freeze that, too. It's wonderful to know that in the Arctic regions of the summer house living-room, fifty pounds of pork loin dangle from the ceiling, out of reach of dogs and cats, awaiting our pleasure. Frozen meat is all right to eat if care is taken to thaw it slowly. Otherwise it will be tough. And, of course, it can't be thawed and frozen again and thawed and eaten. You're apt to die horribly if you're not careful about that, I understand—although so far my knowledge of that is hear-say.

Like everyone else in this country, we freeze up a deer whole, if we're lucky enough to get one, and if we get it late enough in the season. We let it hang long enough to be tender—about two weeks—in an above-freezing place, and then we hang it out in the woodshed. There are two advantages to using the woodshed for a cold storage room.

the month. Remember also all the boxes and bottles in the kitchen that aren't empty, but will be next week. Those are the things I always forget—the vanilla and salt and nutmeg. I used to forget the staples, too, going on the assumption, I guess, that one always has sugar, flour, and tea. It didn't take me very long to learn this little fact of life—one doesn't. Now my lists start with the staples—eggs, butter, milk, oatmeal, cornmeal, molasses, coffee, split peas, beans, salt pork—you go on from there. Next I do the perishables—oranges, bananas, lettuce, whatever vegetables are in stock and good. I leave that to Sam Swett, the manager of the A & P, who, fortunately, is most trustworthy. Rumford is no Babylon, rich in exotic viands. I have to take what I can get. (Once in my ignorance I ordered artichokes, and got back a little note saying, "I heard of these, but I never see one") Meat next—beef, pork or lamb to start the month with, and then a ham, always, which is only semi-perishable. Then the canned goods—meat, fish, fruit, and vegetables Then the odds and ends, like cheese and spices and macaroni and rice and cocoa. It sounds easy enough, but I always forget something, like a lemon. So instead of having Eggs Benedict, as I had planned to have as a special treat, I end by having plain ham and eggs which are no treat at all.

I've just been over the foregoing list, and there is a very serious omission, which I'll bet a button no one spots Of necessity, everyone in the woods makes his own bread. I've left off yeast, which means that we eat corn bread or baking-powder biscuit until Larry goes out again. Almost everyone thinks he likes hot breads, and they are all right once in a while. But they get terribly, terribly tiresome, both to make and to eat, after a week.

The usual supply difficulties are intensified twice a year by the fall freeze-up and the spring break-up, those periods when, as I've explained before, you can't get out of here

meat can be used in the winter for meat pies, pot roasts, hash, or just plain meat and gravy.

That takes care of the bulk of the deer, but there are still the neck, horns and hoofs to be accounted for, and we're the Thrifty Riches. A live deer, grazing by the riverside, is a beautifully proportioned thing; but the minute that it's dead something happens to its neck. It doubles in length apparently There's a lot of meat on it, but the meat's no good It's tough and stringy and can be used for only one thing—mince meat It makes the best mince meat in the world

This leaves only the horns and hoofs. No, we don't make our own gelatin Ralph uses sections of horn for decorating hunting knife handles, and makes gun racks and coat hooks out of the hoofs and thin lower legs They are bent at the ankle, dried and cured, and driven into holes bored in the walls We have a dozen or more of them over the house, and they look very nice indeed and are very handy

And that's that, as far as a deer is concerned

I always think I'm going to can some partridges, too, but I never have yet We don't get very many, and they're so small that it takes several to even make a decent meal. So we never have any left over to can I've never tried salting fish, either, although it can be done, I guess We eat them fresh, in season—fried, if they're pan trout, or baked if they are big salmon Those, and smelts in the spring of the year, are the only kind of fish we get here, except chubs and suckers, which aren't fit to eat. We've never tried eating porcupine, either We've never had to. We don't kill them, though, even when we find them chewing our houses down They are edible, and they're *the only* animal that an unarmed man can kill for food. They're so slow and stupid that they can be clubbed to death if necessary. No woodsman will kill them wantonly. Some-

One is that it is cold. The other is that we're no butchers, and we need a lot of room and a lot of tools to get a steak off a frozen deer. I found a chart in Fanny Farmer for the guidance of housewives in buying beef, and while a deer doesn't seem to be constructed exactly like a cow, still we can get the general hang of the thing from the chart. So we always take Fanny to the woodshed with us when we're going to butcher. Then we lower the corpse from where we've hoisted it to the peak of the roof, and lay it across the chopping block. By using an axe, the buck saw and once in a while the two-man cross-cut, we manage to worry off what will pass as a roast or a steak or a collection of chops.

If we get the deer early in the season before it's cold enough to freeze it, the problem of keeping it is complicated considerably. The liver and heart are eaten first, by me. Ralph won't eat what he inelegantly calls "guts." Then we save out two or three of the choice cuts to be eaten fresh, and I have to can the rest. The steaks I fry for about a minute, first on one side and then the other, in a good hot spider, so they'll brown. Then I roll each slice in a tight little roll, pack the rolls into jars, semi-seal, and boil the jars in a washboiler full of water for two hours and a half. After the jars are removed from the boiler, I complete the sealing, stand them upside down to cool, scrutinizing them at intervals for tell-tale air bubbles which mean leaks and consequent spoilage, and finally put them away. Later these can be unrolled and broiled or fried as ordinary steaks; but unless they are lightly fried before canning, they'll be nothing more than plain boiled meat.

The tougher cuts, such as the forequarters, I hack up and boil in large kettles. Next day I cut the lean meat from the bones, pack it tightly into pint jars—pints are better for our size family—fill the jars with gravy, partially seal, and go on from there with the same routine as above. This

but it doesn't really make much difference what it is. It comes under smitches and dabs in our family.

We have Desperation Dishes, too. These are things we eat when we run out of food, for one reason or other. A stand-by, of course, is baked beans, which we have every Saturday night anyhow. In a minute I'm going into the proper baking of beans in detail. It's a subject that deserves attention. Baked beans can be terrible, or they can be swell. In our family Gerrish is the judge. He's a baked bean expert from away-back. If he says after the first forkful, "Your hand slipped a mite this week, didn't it, Louise?", I feel like crawling under the table. But if he says, "You hit it about right this time," my chest swells to the button-bursting point.

Even good baked beans can become tedious. I remember one year when the lake didn't finish freezing and we couldn't get in any supplies, we had them twice a day for ten days. One of these days was Thanksgiving, too. In honor of that day I invented another Desperation Dish. Besides beans, we had in the house a very small can of Vienna sausages and a half a bottle of ketchup. I put a layer of cold baked beans in a baking dish, sprinkled lavishly with ketchup, and arranged half the sausages on it. Then I repeated, ending with a layer of beans, and heated the whole until it bubbled gently. It was really pretty good. We have it now every once in a while, even when we aren't desperate. Desperation Dishes often turn out much better than you'd expect.

Now about the baking of the beans. Baked beans have to be baked. That sounds like a gratuitous restatement of the obvious, but it isn't. Some misguided souls boil beans all day and call the lily-livered result baked beans. I refrain from comment.

We use either New York State or Michigan white beans, because we like them best, although yellow-eyes are very

day he may be in a spot where a porcupine will save him from starvation. Some states—Montana, for example—have game laws to protect the porcupine, for this very reason.

In Maine, as in all other parts of the world, there's a lot of talk goes around about the excellence of the native country cooking. In Maine, as in all other parts of the world with which I am familiar—not so many, I'll grant you, but enough—this is largely eye-wash. There are a few fine country cooks around here, but most of the food is very undistinguished in character. Most local cooks have two ideas about what to do with food They either fry it—and I think the steady diet of fried food in Maine accounts largely for the high incidence of chronic indigestion and stomach ulcers—or else they make a chowder out of it. We have a by-word in our family. When confronted with the disposal of almost anything from a dead fish to a pair of worn-out pants, someone is bound to say, "It'd make a nice chowder!" That really isn't stretching the point much, either.

I'm indebted to the local cooks for another expression That is "smitches and dabs" We have a meal of smitches and dabs about once a week, usually on wash day. This consists of a smitch of this and a dab of that. In other words, that's the meal that cleans up the ice box. It's a family institution by now, and a very useful one Sometimes these left-overs are just warmed up separately and sometimes they are combined into one dish. You dump some odds and ends of meat, any stray vegetables, a can of beef broth—to make gravy—into a baking dish, top the whole with biscuit dough, bake, and you have a shepherd's pie. Or you put left-over salmon, peas, ham, and a can of mushroom soup into a dish, cover with buttered crumbs, and again bake. I suppose this is some kind of a casserole,

good. I always serve them with corn bread, ketchup and pickles.

Another Desperation Dish is Mock Tripe It is an old home recipe of that almost legendary Norwegian guide, Travis Hoke, and is very useful in disposing of otherwise unusable odds and ends If you have a fresh salmon you can put its skin in a light brine until you are ready to use it, or the skin of a baked fish, carefully removed, will serve as well. Save the daily leavings of the oatmeal pot and spread them out about a half inch thick to dry. When you have amassed a sufficient quantity and it is covered with a heavy brown crust, season well and wrap in the fish skin. Dredge this with flour and put it in your roasting pan with a small amount of water or milk, cover, and bake at least an hour in a medium oven. The result is truly amazing

Every cook is supposed to have some short cuts or labor savers that experience has taught her. I ought to have a million, for Lord knows I have learned to cook in a hard school. But I have only a measly little list of discoveries. The first is that an egg beater can be used for a lot of other things than the beating of eggs. I'd almost rather throw my stove away than my egg beater I use it to take the lumps out of gravy or chocolate cornstarch pudding or cream sauce When the cereal sinks in a leaden mass to the bottom of the pan, because I didn't have the water boiling briskly, or didn't stir it enough I beat it up with the egg beater, and it comes out smooth and creamy I beat mashed potato with it, and squash I beat anything and everything with an egg beater, and I always put it immediately into a deep pan of cold water to soak Otherwise all the time it saves will be spent in washing the thing It's devilish to get clean if it is allowed to dry

My second little device is a pane of window glass which I put over my open cook book I'm a messy cook, splashing

popular, too. I take two generous cups of dry beans, soak over night and put them on to boil early in the morning. When the skins curl off when you blow on them, they've boiled long enough. Then I put in the bottom of the bean pot, or iron kettle with a tight-fitting cover, a six-by-eight-inch square of salt pork, with the rind slashed every quarter of an inch, a quarter of a cup of sugar, half a cup of molasses, a large onion chopped fairly fine, and a heaping teaspoonful of dry mustard. This amount of sugar and molasses may be increased or cut, depending on whether you like your beans sweeter or not so sweet. This is a matter every man has to decide for himself. The beans are dumped in on top of this conglomerate, and enough hot water is added to cover, but only cover. The baking pot should be large enough so there's at least an inch of freeboard above the water. Otherwise they'll boil over and smell to high heaven. Cover tightly and put into a medium oven—about 350° is right. They should be in the oven by half past nine in the morning at the latest, and they should stay there until supper time, which in our family is at six.

So far there is no trick in making good baked beans. The trick, if it can be dignified by such a term, lies in the baking, and like a great many trade tricks, it consists only of patience and conscientious care. You have to tend the beans faithfully, adding water whenever the level gets down below the top of the beans, and you have to keep the oven temperature even. If you're lazy, you can put in a lot of water and not have to watch them so closely. But to get the best results, you should add only enough water each time to barely cover the beans. This means that you'll give up all social engagements for the day, as you can't leave the baby for more than half an hour at a time. I think the results are worth it—but then, I haven't anywhere special to go, anyhow. My beans are brown and mealy, and they swim in a thick brown juice. They're

good I always serve them with corn bread, ketchup and pickles.

Another Desperation Dish is Mock Tripe. It is an old home recipe of that almost legendary Norwegian guide, Travis Hoke, and is very useful in disposing of otherwise unusable odds and ends. If you have a fresh salmon you can put its skin in a light brine until you are ready to use it, or the skin of a baked fish, carefully removed, will serve as well. Save the daily leavings of the oatmeal pot and spread them out about a half inch thick to dry When you have amassed a sufficient quantity and it is covered with a heavy brown crust, season well and wrap in the fish skin. Dredge this with flour and put it in your roasting pan with a small amount of water or milk, cover, and bake at least an hour in a medium oven. The result is truly amazing

Every cook is supposed to have some short cuts or labor savers that experience has taught her I ought to have a million, for Lord knows I have learned to cook in a hard school But I have only a measly little list of discoveries. The first is that an egg beater can be used for a lot of other things than the beating of eggs. I'd almost rather throw my stove away than my egg beater. I use it to take the lumps out of gravy or chocolate cornstarch pudding or cream sauce When the cereal sinks in a leaden mass to the bottom of the pan, because I didn't have the water boiling briskly or didn't stir it enough I beat it up with the egg beater, and it comes out smooth and creamy I beat mashed potato with it and squash I beat anything and everything with an egg beater and I always put it immediately into a deep pan of cold water to soak Otherwise all the time it saves will be spent in washing the thing It's devilish to get clean if it is allowed to dry

My second little device is a pane of window glass which I put over my open cook book I'm a messy cook, splashing

popular, too. I take two generous cups of dry beans, soak over night and put them on to boil early in the morning When the skins curl off when you blow on them, they've boiled long enough. Then I put in the bottom of the bean pot, or iron kettle with a tight-fitting cover, a six-by-eight-inch square of salt pork, with the rind slashed every quarter of an inch, a quarter of a cup of sugar, half a cup of molasses, a large onion chopped fairly fine, and a heaping teaspoonful of dry mustard This amount of sugar and molasses may be increased or cut, depending on whether you like your beans sweeter or not so sweet. This is a matter every man has to decide for himself. The beans are dumped in on top of this conglomerate, and enough hot water is added to cover, but only cover. The baking pot should be large enough so there's at least an inch of free-board above the water. Otherwise they'll boil over and smell to high heaven. Cover tightly and put into a medium oven—about 350° is right. They should be in the oven by half past nine in the morning at the latest, and they should stay there until supper time, which in our family is at six.

So far there is no trick in making good baked beans. The trick, if it can be dignified by such a term, lies in the baking, and like a great many trade tricks, it consists only of patience and conscientious care. You have to tend the beans faithfully, adding water whenever the level gets down below the top of the beans, and you have to keep the oven temperature even. If you're lazy, you can put in a lot of water and not have to watch them so closely. But to get the best results, you should add only enough water each time to barely cover the beans This means that you'll give up all social engagements for the day, as you can't leave the baby for more than half an hour at a time. I think the results are worth it—but then, I haven't anywhere special to go, anyhow. My beans are brown and mealy, and they swim in a thick brown juice. They're

way, we were very much surprised to see come staggering out of the snowy woods. We'd figured that we would be among the submerged and forgotten one percent, when it came to census taking.

The other difficulty I have to surmount is the kitchen itself In the country, and even more in the woods, a kitchen is much more than a place to cook. It's the place where people sit for warmth or sociability, or to do odd jobs We have the usual kitchen furnishings—straight-backed chairs, table, work bench, sink, ice box, stove and woodbox We also have a comfortable rocking chair and a pile of books and magazines Half the time, when I'm cooking, I'm also hurdling over someone's legs, or a dog or cat or a pile of guns and coats Or I may have to walk around a landing net that has been left by the stove, or an inner tube that Ralph is patching in the middle of the floor In all seasons except summer, I have to dodge a lineful of wool socks hung up to dry, and skirt two pails of water left by the end of the stove to keep warm for car-starting purposes Often my pots and pans have to find what space they can around a soldering iron thrust into the firebox and my pot roast is shoved back in the oven to accommodate a pair of newly oiled boots that must be dried

I used to try to keep the kitchen sacred to legitimate kitchen activities, but I finally gave it up No matter how often I chased Gerrish and his tackle-mending or Ralph and his car-repairing or Rufus and his fleet of trucks into the living-room, they always insidiously filtered back. Actually there's an advantage to having them right there. If they're in the room they can't very well pretend *not* to hear me when I start hollering to have my water pails filled or some wood brought in from the woodshed And I might as well break down at last and admit that I like having them underfoot The few times that they stayed in the

flour and milk and batter and egg yolk all over the table If they splash on the book, the pages will stick together and you can't use that recipe again, as I have found to my sorrow. If they splash on the glass, that's all right. Glass washes.

My third and last contribution to the culinary world is a way to crumb fish or croquettes or cutlets or what-have-you easily and quickly. I put my crumbs or flour in a paper bag, drop in the object to be crumbed, close the bag and shake violently. This doesn't sound like much of an invention but it saves an awful lot of mess. When you're through you have nothing to clean up. You just shove the paper bag into the stove and burn up the scanty leavings.

Now I'm probably going to discover that all these things are common practice among cooks everywhere, and that I'm just tagging tardily along behind my brighter sisters.

There are two factors which complicate the cooking situation for me. One is that I never know how many people I am going to have to feed. I always have to allow for at least one more than the family, in case anyone drops in. In the woods the first question you ask anybody, no matter what time of day he arrives, is, "Have you eaten?" This is absolutely obligatory, and the reason is easy to see. A man can't drop into a dog cart for a hamburger or a cup of coffee, if he's hungry He expects the population to feed him, and in return he expects to feed whoever drops in at his place. It's an understood thing, just as it is understood that in winter, no matter whose house you go into, if they are not at home you immediately look at the fires and add wood if necessary. You do this even if you are a stranger to the householder. It may be serious to let a fire go out So we feed game wardens and fire wardens and timber cruisers and lost hunters and stray woodsmen and anyone else who happens along, and they tend our fires as required Once we even fed the census taker, a gentleman whom, by the

cylinder Packard. Frequently, with only six inches to go before we could roll her out, the entire scaffolding would collapse and drop the boulder back to the bottom of the pit—a perfectly maddening thing to have happen I do believe in the malevolence of the inanimate, and of all inanimate objects, stones are the most malevolent. In the first place the stones in our section lack symmetry, so if you apply pressure where you think it will do the most good, they are just as apt to roll to the left onto your foot, as to the right where you plan to have them roll. In the second place, they are ponderous, and once they start rolling, you can't stop them All you can do is jump clear and start swearing In the third place—and this to my mind is the worst of all—after they have flopped the wrong way and have ruined an entire morning's work, they just lie there. There's something about the bland face of a stone, lying in the middle of a pile of wrecked scaffolding at the bottom of a hole, that makes you want to throw yourself face down on the ground and kick and scream

We got enough rocks and roots out of the ground that first year so that we could plant a few things in the cleared spaces But we didn't get them all out, by any means, and haven't even yet, in spite of a yearly session with them We put in peas and string beans and carrots and beets and corn Ralph and I were no gardeners but Gerrish had had a garden in one place or another ever since he wore diapers, so in most things we bowed to his superior wisdom. But when it came to corn, he and Ralph disagreed Ralph contended that the growing season as far north and as high as we are is too short to allow corn to reach maturity, and that it should be started in the house and transplanted into the garden as soon as the weather was warm enough Gerrish announced categorically that one did not transplant corn. It wouldn't grow, and even if it did, there was no point to it The season was plenty long enough.

living-room when I sent them there, I felt like a social pariah out in the kitchen all alone with my efficiency.

To augment our larder, we have a vegetable garden, and believe me, please, that's quite a feat when you start, as we did, with a little plot of land which has excellent sun and drainage, but which also has a growth of brush and evergreens all over it, and under that nothing but thin, acid woods soil studded thickly with rocks and boulders and solidly interlaced with a mat of roots. Our garden is splendid now, but it's taken us eight years to get it that way.

The first year was spent in cutting the brush and trees and removing the roots and the worst of the rocks. This was honest-to-God hard labor, particularly as we didn't have the right equipment for it. Ralph and Gerrish and I have spent a whole day getting out a boulder that weighed more than the three of us put together. The first step, always, was to trench around the thing so we could get at it, and Ralph and Gerrish did this. Then they collected an assortment of chains, levers, and cant dogs, and summoned me. My part consisted solely of lending my weight on the end of a twenty-foot beam that served as a pry, or dodging around the edges of the operation with an armful of blocks of assorted sizes. "Over here! Over here!" Ralph and Gerrish would shout in chorus, their faces red and strained with lifting. "For God's sake, stick a block under her before—" I'd thrust a block in to hold what they'd gained and they'd relax, panting and perspiring, to get their breaths and plan the next step. The general modus operandi was to lift the boulder up with levers to ground level, building a scaffolding of blocks under her as she came—I'm catching this "she" habit, too—and then roll her across an extremely precarious bridge of planks to solid earth. Then we worried her onto a stone-drag and dragged her away behind our then current work car, the old twelve-

We had corn off both sides of the patch on the very same day, and there was nothing to distinguish the one from the other Now we plant our corn by the Gerrish system. It's a lot easier

Oh, the troubles we had that first year! No sooner had our vegetables broken ground than the deer started coming in at night and eating the plants We decided at once that we had to fence the garden, but it was going to take a little time to get the fencing material in from the Outside In the meantime something had to be done. For a while we worked days cutting and setting fence posts, and sat up nights with a shot gun But you can't keep that up forever. Then the game warden told us to spread some blood meal around This a packing house product that is used primarily for fertilizer The smell of blood is supposed to frighten the deer away It didn't, though. On the contrary, I think it attracted them. Then someone told us that if we made a little tent in the garden and kept a lighted lantern in it all night, the deer would keep their distance. The tent material had to be thin, so the light would glow through, and the color had to be changed often, so the deer wouldn't acquire the contempt bred by familiarity. We tried that—we'd have tried anything—and rather surprisingly it worked. At least, it worked for a week. Then one morning we went into the garden and found the tracks of a dozen deer, all converging on our little tent Apparently they'd held a meeting and decided on a mass investigation They hadn't touched any of the vegetables, though I guess they were too intrigued with the light to bother about anything else

That very afternoon the wire for the fence came, and next morning we put it onto the posts we'd set so fast that it smoked. And that was that

That wasn't the woodchucks, though, that crawled through the mesh of the wire We had to set traps for

They argued two or three days about this, and then they decided that they'd divide the corn patch, and each would take half to cultivate as he saw fit. Ralph made himself some nice little starting flats, filled them with dirt, and started his corn in the house. Gerrish put his corn away in a drawer and forgot about it until the ground warmed up.

Ralph's corn came up very nicely and he tended it as if it were black orchids On the same day that Gerrish put his seed into the ground, Ralph transplanted his thriving little shoots They looked very green and tender and brave out there in the cold world, and he covered them carefully every night, to guard them against a spring frost. They didn't grow very much at first. I suppose they were getting themselves acclimated After about a week, Gerrish's corn started to come up, and that's where the double-dealing entered the picture.

Gerrish came home from fishing one evening with a whole string of chub Nobody eats them, so I couldn't imagine why he had saved them, or why he was hiding them so carefully under the back steps. He didn't mind telling me, after swearing me to secrecy He'd remembered that the Indians used to plant their corn over dead fish, for fertilizer, and he was going to tunnel into his corn hills and put dead chub where they'd do the most good. He'd show Ralph how to raise corn

Well, a promise is a promise, I know, and I usually try to keep mine. But this was supposed to be a controlled experiment, and I've been brought up to respect the scientific attitude. I couldn't let that go. I told Ralph—swearing him to secrecy, of course—and that night he went chub fishing, with some success Thereafter the two of them spent a lot of time sneaking fish corpses into the garden and burying them under their respective corn hills. I used to help them both, which was probably traitorous of me, but it afforded me a lot of fun.

a cotton shirt with the sleeves rolled up and the neck band unbuttoned I can wear that here. I look thoroughly sloppy, but here it doesn't matter. Ralph and Rufus love me—I hope—for my good nature. There wouldn't be even that about me to love if I had to try to be chic.

This is what my entire wardrobe consists of at the moment

1 pair of blue denim pants
1 pair of canvas pants (my garden, fishing, and berrying pants)
1 pair wool whipcord jodhpurs (Ralph hates them)
1 pair wool ski pants
3 cotton shirts (the 59c variety)
3 wool shirts
4 pairs of cotton ankle socks (17c a pair)
3 pairs of wool ski socks (I made them myself—39c each, but worth a lot more)
2 sweaters
1 wool jacket
1 denim jacket
1 bathing suit and cap
3 changes of underwear and nightclothes
1 very old bathrobe
1 wool bonnet and mittens to match
3 pairs of 79c sneakers
1 pair of leather moccasins
1 large kerchief, to use as hat, scarf, berry pail, dog leash, depending on the circumstances

I did have a belt, but I never wore it so I gave it to Gerrish And I have a 22 revolver, but I don't suppose that comes under wardrobe really, even here I've also got a tweed suit and a pair of silk stockings and some shoes in case I have to go Outside in a hurry, but it's been a long

them. *That* wasn't the heavy rain, either, that gullied out the slope of the garden and washed out half the crop. We had to terrace the whole slope, the next year, to prevent a recurrence. But neither fence nor traps nor terracing was any answer to our basic problem, the problem of the soil. It's taken us all these years to lick its thinness and acidity and infertility. We've spaded in tons of manure which we've hauled from Miller's and various lumber camp stables, to add humus and give body to the soil. We've bought hundreds of pounds of lime and raked it in, to counteract the acidity which is always a characteristic of forest mold. We've scattered hundreds of pounds of commercial balanced fertilizers, too What we've accomplished really, is make arable earth out of the rubble heaps of sand and clay and gravel that the great glaciers dumped here ages and ages ago It may not be a becoming attitude, but all the same, we do point with pride to our vegetable garden. I consider that my skill with a spading fork is just as much a part of my housekeeping ability as is my urban sister's nose for a bargain in canned goods. They both result in putting better, cheaper vegetables on the family table.

The clothing problem causes me very little concern One of the reasons I like to live here is that I don't have to bother to try to be a snappy number. I couldn't, anyway, no matter where I lived; but in civilization I'd at least have to make the effort, in fairness to Ralph and Rufus. I couldn't humiliate them by putting them in the position of having to answer, when someone asked, "Who's that funny-looking woman?"—"Oh, that's my wife" or "my mother," as the case might be. And, boy! would I be miserable! I can't stand having things tight around my waist or neck or wrists, and you can't be stylish unless you have your clothes anchored in a few places, at least My idea of an ideal costume is slacks worn low on the hip bones, and

time since I've even looked at them. They've probably perished of dry rot by now. The last time I had to go out in a hurry was when Kyak became suddenly and terrifyingly ill and needed to be taken at once to the veterinary. It was at night and raining pitchforks, and I had no time or inclination to dress up. I wore my fishing pants and Gerrish's raincoat, which was just as well. The only people besides Ralph that I saw were Larry Parsons and the vet. I didn't really see Larry He was running the boat, but it was so dark and foggy that he had to make the trip down the lake by compass, and all I could distinguish of him was a dark shadow up in the bow and a faint blur of features when he inhaled on his cigarette or turned the flashlight onto the compass. And later in the car it was almost as dark. The vet was too much interested in Kyak's symptoms to bother about what I had on I'm sure the next time an emergency arises, the conditions will be duplicated. So I don't have to worry about my Going Out Clothes.

Ralph's wardrobe is about like mine, except he has gumboots for winter and work shoes for summer and a canvas parka and a mackinaw He prefers canvas pants the whole year through and refuses to have riding or ski pants Rufus wears overalls and cotton shirts, or sun suits, for summer, and ski pants and sweaters in the winter. Once when he was very little I did buy him a little wash suit, with shorts and frilled shirt. He looked perfectly adorable in it the one time he had it on But he and his father and Gerrish all pronounced it sissy, and I could never get him to wear it again. Sally is the best-dressed member of the family. She goes Out to school, so she has to have the usual quota of dresses, presentable shoes, and street coats. At her age, too, these things would matter, I suppose, even if she never went Outside.

There are a few general aspects of the clothes situation that interest me very much. One of them is the growth of

Now, I couldn't get along without it It's wonderful as a source of supply, and their catalogs are a fascinating source of entertainment. We sit by the hour looking at the illustrations and reading the descriptions of the thousands of items in the enormous twice-yearly catalogs, and we buy anything from motor parts to ankle socks from Sears' or Ward's If, for my sins, I ever have to live at the corner of 42nd and Broadway I shall still trade with the Mail Order I'm completely wedded to the idea.

Everybody in this country is thoroughly familiar with the Mail Order I show up at Middle in a new pair of slacks and Alice Miller says, "Oh, those are those Ward's slacks A dollar ninety-eight I was thinking about getting me some only in brown" Or somebody comes in from Upton sporting a new hunting shirt, and I can put the price tag and percentage of wool on it with the accuracy of a purchasing agent Fifty percent wool, and two seventy-five in the big catalog, but he paid only two forty-nine for it They had them on sale in the latest flyer There are no secrets between Mail Order devotees

I never realized how revealing a filled-in order blank can be until one day I happened on the sample order blank on the back of the Sears catalog. This is a facsimile of an order, made out in full for the guidance of the customer in making out his own order Very likely the name and address at the top of the blank are fictitious but the order itself looks genuine I read it through carefully, and I felt at once that I knew the woman who made it out as well as I know myself

The goods were to be sent to John T Jones R F.D. No. 1 Tipton Iowa but Johnny Jones didn't make out the order Mrs Jones did that She hadn't been married very long I think, and she didn't have very much money to spend But she had ideas She wanted her house to be nice. She lived in the country in Iowa but she didn't want to let

ingly. You can't get something for nothing, even in the country. I buy homespun yarn from various farmers' wives around on the Outside, and I pay very little for it. It's all wool, from sheep reared on the place. That sounds like one of those marvellous bargains; but it isn't. It's worth exactly what I pay for it. It's harsh, and it's unevenly spun, and there are only two colors—gray and a tan mixture. For my purpose—work socks and mittens—it's quite all right. But when I want to make a sweater, or a nice pair of socks for Ralph, I send away to the Mail Order for some decent yarn.

The truth of the matter is that in spite of the literary convention of bursting barns, overflowing larders, and cellars crammed with luscious preserves and delicious smoked hams, in spite of the accepted versions of the countryman as being clad in the warmest and best of wools, the thickest and softest of leathers, and the deepest and darkest of furs, country people are clothed much more shoddily and poorly than city people, class for class. In short, the country standard of living is very much lower than the city standard. This is actually not as hard on country people as it would seem to be. You don't mind cheap clothes if everyone else is wearing clothes just as cheap. There are other things that contribute to health besides a balanced diet. There are fresh air and sunlight and lack of nervous tension. I think, probably, whether you're better off in the country or in the city depends, in the final analysis, on where you'd rather be. You're best off where you're the happiest.

As I have said before, we do all our purchasing from the Mail Order—more formally, from Sears, Roebuck and Montgomery Ward. Having been brought up in a medium-sized town within easy reach of Boston, I never had a chance to become familiar with the great American institution of the Mail Order until I came to live in the woods.

herself go. She wanted to look smart like the town girls. I know just how she conned the catalog night after night, between finishing the supper dishes and going to bed, to be sure she was getting the best possible value for her money. She made a lot of selections and jotted them down—the names of the articles and the prices—on an old envelope, before she made her final choices. I know, because I have done the same thing. She had only thirty dollars to spend. I know that, because the order came to $29.42. That's just about as close as you can come to a specified sum.

I know that this order was important to her, because it is written so carefully and neatly in ink. The penmanship is obviously not her note-to-the-milkman hand. It's her very best penmanship, stiff and careful, with the *t's* crossed accurately. That's the way I write when I make out an order to Sears' or Ward's. That's the only time I do write that way.

This is what she bought. Four yards of rose-printed chintz, a dusty rose chenille bedspread, and a pair of dusty rose curtains. You see? She was fixing up a bedroom, with spread, curtains, and dressing table to match. Probably it was for the spare room; she'd at last saved enough to redecorate it as a real guest room. None of the articles is the best grade—that I remembered from my own perusals of the catalog But they're the best she could afford. She wanted her house to be nice

Then she bought three pairs of flag-red ankle socks—that's how I know she must be young, and therefore newly married—and a green suit, Cat. No 55H7186, which cost $15.50. I remembered Cat. No 55H7186 It's a nice suit, very young and dashing. She hesitated a long time before she spent that much money on a suit, I know, but in the end she remembered how proud of her Johnny always acted when he took her to the movies Saturday night be-

because it's too hard to keep clean, what with the menfolks of your family, and the dogs and cats, tracking in mud, sawdust and snow. There's nothing the matter with the flowers and the books and there's nothing the matter with the shabby chairs, if you can accept them as shabby chairs and don't try to make something interesting out of them. BUT—and this is never taken into consideration in the novels—if you're the kind of weak-minded person who will put up with faded chintz and dogs in shabby chairs in the first place, you're too weak-minded to put your foot down there. You allow the corners of this interesting room to become jammed with fishing tackle and guns; the table and mantel are soon buried under a mound of fly-tying material, magazines, odd pieces of rock, and work gloves; the floor is littered with toys and tools; and several pairs of boots for all types of weather are parked at the end of the couch. In short, the place is a mess. The only thing that can be said for it is that there is nothing in it that can be hurt by the roughest usage. It's a room you can let yourself go in, for what that's worth. It's a room where you can put your feet up and relax.

That's the kind of a home Ralph and I have made for ourselves in the backwoods, and that's the kind of marriage we've managed, together, to make, too. There are drawbacks to living off the beaten track, but there is one thing that more than offsets any number of drawbacks: if you can stand this life at all, your marriage has a much greater chance of success than it would have anywhere else. I believe that a great many marriages fail because there is no true dependence between the partners thereof Somehow, when a well-dressed, well-fed, sleek and contented male says to me—and there have been such occasions in my palmy youth, believe it or not—"I need you!", I just can't quite believe it, much as I'd like to. It's nice to hear, but it's silly. When, however, Ralph comes into the house with

the sleeve of his shirt torn and blood dripping from a gash on his arm, and shouts at the top of his lungs, "Damn it, where are you? I need you!", he's obviously telling the truth He may be interrupting me in the middle of something that I don't want to leave, but that doesn't make any difference. He does need me, and he needs me right then There isn't any doctor he can go to to tie him up. There isn't any restaurant where he can get his meals, or any laundry to wash his shirts. I'm necessary to him; and by the same token, he's necessary to me. It's a terribly true thing to say, I know, but most of us have to be needed to be happy.

Is it, then, necessary to live the hard way, just so you can feel you are needed? For me, yes, it is. I know myself too well to be able to delude myself that my wit or my beauty or my wisdom or my intelligence could ever become indispensable to anyone. I have to have things demonstrated in material terms that I can understand. And I have found this to be true: that the material makes a very good and solid foundation for a dependence that cannot be defined, an inter-dependence of mind and spirit which we might never have known had we not first had to depend on each other for the tangible, demonstrable things.

We've managed to make a good marriage This I say with all humility It's a marriage in which there is nothing that can be hurt by the roughest usage. It's a marriage that you can let yourself go in, a marriage in which you can put up your feet and relax.

V



"Aren't the Children a Problem?"

THE TRUE YANKEE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, "AREN'T the children a problem?" is, of course, another question: "Aren't children always a problem, no matter where you live?" If they aren't, I've wasted a lot of time in my civilized past listening to the bridge table chat of the young mothers of my acquaintanceship. Unless my memory plays me false, parenthood anywhere from the heart of Texas to the middle of Manhattan is one long coping with maladjusted personalities, crooked teeth, allergies to goose feathers, and lamentable traits inherited from the other side of the family. In short, certainly children are a problem, only in the woods the details of the problem aren't quite the same as they are on the Outside

The problem starts with getting them born Of course, with Sally, I skipped this She's my step-child, and sprang into my life, full-panoplied, as it were, at the age of twelve. I skipped not only the actual giving birth, but also the house-breaking and habit-forming This advantage is offset to an extent by the fact that I'm responsible for her not only to her father and my own conscience, as I am with Rufus, but also to her mother as well—no mean responsibility. It would be bad enough to have something happen to your own child. It would be almost impossible to have to go to another woman and say, "So sorry, but I let your daughter get drowned." That's the chief reason that the first thing I did about Sally when I took her over was to

sist that she learn to swim. All in all, though, I would say that I came by Sally in the easy way.

Rufus I got the hard way, on the 18th of December at 1:55 A.M., with the thermometer down to 10° above zero. That's a night I won't forget in a hurry. Neither will Ralph, I imagine. Ralph has always been the type that, if he heard it rumored that the wife of one of his friends was going to have a baby eight months from date, took to crossing the street and raising his hat politely from the opposite sidewalk, when he met her. He was taking no chances of having to ride in a taxi with her to the hospital. The mere thought caused him to break out in a cold sweat. Well, the night Rufus was born he didn't have any time to worry about what might happen in a taxi. He was much too busy coping, single handed, with what was happening right then and there. In spite of the temperature, though, he was doing his quota of sweating. I can see him now, with a wool cap pulled down over his ears, his mackinaw collar turned up to meet it, and his mittens on, reading by lantern light a little book called, "If Baby Comes Ahead of the Doctor." Perspiration was running down his face. You see, he knew the doctor couldn't possibly get there for ten hours or more.

Nothing is more tiresome than the details of some other woman's pregnancy, but just bear with me for a minute. I've been wanting to say this for a long time. I don't believe most women need be miserable at all. There are two simple preventive measures to take. First, they can stop regarding themselves as being for the period, interesting and unique and fragile, and treating themselves like rare porcelain. It's very bad for them. No wonder they feel rotten. A coal heaver would feel rotten too, if he kept telling himself that he ought to on general principles. And second, they can just not listen to their married friends' and maiden aunts' tales of the terrible things that may happen

to them. Some of the things that otherwise sensible women tell prospective mothers are enough to frighten the wits out of anyone. They won't let you remember that these ghoulish tales are the exceptions and that most babies are born with some discomfort, it's true, but not much else. Personally, I'd almost rather have a baby any day than go to the dentist. My friends tell me that this is just because I was lucky. I think I made my own luck. I felt swell, so why should I alter my normal behavior and curtail my normal activities? And—this I will admit was just plain luck —I was so situated that there were no married friends and maiden aunts to scare the pants off me. Result: I had a very pleasant pregnancy, thank you.

End of Lecture on Prenatal Care, by Mrs Rich. Thanks for listening

I was supposed to go out to Rumford to have Rufus; but then he wasn't supposed to be born until the first of the year. The idea was that I would stay in over Christmas, and then in a leisurely way, betake myself to the hospital to wait the necessary week or ten days. Consequently we hadn't moved out of the summer house which is without heat upstairs Ralph was going to move the things in my absence. In the meantime I pursued my program of "Business as Usual," and the usual business of a lovely day such as the 17th of December turned out to be, was sliding on the Pond. I never saw such a beautiful winter day. It was warm and sunny, and the ground was covered with a light fluff of snow, which was blue in the shadows, and gold in the sun, and faint rose and purple on the distant hills. On the Pond it had blown into tightly packed patches which were white, as snow is supposed to be, against the sky-reflecting deep blue of the glare ice We'd started to go to Middle Dam, but when we saw the Pond, we went there instead. The sliding was perfect. We could run on the snow islands and slide across the intervening

know quite what for, but I remembered that in books people always heat water under similar circumstances.

He went away and I could hear him rattling away down in the kitchen. By and by he came back and said that he wanted a nice wool blanket to warm over the stove before he put it in the laundry basket. "Got to have some place to park the kid," he explained, and I stopped worrying about him. He was functioning again, that was plain. I told him where to find the blanket, in between pains, and he went away again. When he came back, five minutes later, he was a father.

Usually a father has no immediate responsibilities toward his new off-spring aside from running up to the hospital once a day for a viewing—and of course paying the hospital bill. Ralph's responsibilities, on the contrary, were immediate and pressing. There was the little matter of the umbilical cord to be cut and tied, first of all.

"And don't you wash new babies?" I asked.

"Nope. You grease them." I don't know to this day how he came by this piece of knowledge, but he was right. Perhaps he read it in the *Reader's Digest*. That's where much of our information originates. He folded his new son in a bath towel and went away with him, while I lay in bed and worried. What did he know about *greasing* babies and tying cords? The new baby was crying, too, a little but furious bellow. I could hear him from away upstairs. What was his father doing to him? Or wait a minute—you were supposed only to worry, weren't you, if they didn't cry. So probably it was all right. It was criminal, I decided, for a grown woman to arrive at motherhood knowing as little about the whole thing as I did. By and by Ralph came back.

"Did you get him greased all right?" I asked anxiously.

He looked offended. "Certainly I did. I should hope,

after all the pistons I've oiled in my lifetime—" Pistons, mind you!

"What did you use?" I asked, horrified, "Motor oil?"

"Olive oil, naturally."

"Where did you get it? We haven't any olive oil."

"I've got a can. I use it to make fly-dope out of."

Well, why not after all? If early experience molds a child's life I could see from where I lay that I was going to be the mother of another mechanic and fly-fisherman.

"He's all right and he's all there," Ralph went on "Fingernails, toenails, hair, everything I went over him carefully And, my God! is he homely!" He threw out his chest "I never did like pretty men anyway," he added complacently "He's got a grip like a wrestler, and Cookie likes him, so I guess he'll get along all right And say. What am I supposed to do with all that hot water?"

Oh yes The hot water Well—"Why don't you make some coffee?" Suddenly I was starved. "Make me a sandwich too—a ham sandwich with a lot of mustard."

Alice Miller came down in the morning, as soon as it was light Lying in bed. I could hear her laughing down in the kitchen She laughed all the way upstairs "What do you suppose Ralph used to tie his cord with?" she demanded before she was halfway into the room. "A piece of rope! That poor little kid! The knot's bigger than he is. I guess I'll call the doctor in Rumford when I get home and tell him there's no need of his coming way in here. No sense in spending twenty dollars for nothing—"

And so Rufus missed his chance of having a doctor look him over I guess it didn't do any harm. He's never seen a doctor from that day to this, except in a purely social capacity

I frequently read in magazines articles which begin:—
DO YOU REALIZE—

know quite what for, but I remembered that in books people always heat water under similar circumstances.

He went away and I could hear him rattling away down in the kitchen. By and by he came back and said that he wanted a nice wool blanket to warm over the stove before he put it in the laundry basket. "Got to have some place to park the kid," he explained, and I stopped worrying about him. He was functioning again, that was plain. I told him where to find the blanket, in between pains, and he went away again. When he came back, five minutes later, he was a father

Usually a father has no immediate responsibilities toward his new off-spring aside from running up to the hospital once a day for a viewing—and of course paying the hospital bill. Ralph's responsibilities, on the contrary, were immediate and pressing. There was the little matter of the umbilical cord to be cut and tied, first of all.

"And don't you wash new babies?" I asked.

"Nope You grease them " I don't know to this day how he came by this piece of knowledge, but he was right. Perhaps he read it in the *Reader's Digest*. That's where much of our information originates. He folded his new son in a bath towel and went away with him, while I lay in bed and worried. What did he know about greasing babies and tying cords? The new baby was crying, too, a little but furious bellow. I could hear him from away upstairs. What was his father doing to him? Or wait a minute—you were supposed only to worry, weren't you, if they didn't cry. So probably it was all right It was criminal, I decided, for a grown woman to arrive at motherhood knowing as little about the whole thing as I did. By and by Ralph came back.

"Did you get him greased all right?" I asked anxiously.

He looked offended. "Certainly I did. I should hope,

That blank percent of the homes in America have no running water?

That blank percent have no bathrooms?

That blank percent of our children are born with no doctor in attendance?

These appalling figures show that the huge army of the underprivileged—

I cluck my tongue, suitably appalled for a moment until true realization hits me between the eyes. "My God," I think, and then I am truly appalled "That's *us* they're talking about! Why—*we're* the underprivileged! Why—Why—"

But are we? I'm not stupid enough to recommend that all, or even any, children be born with only their fathers in attendance. But because it happened to Rufus doesn't make him underprivileged In fact, I would say he was especially privileged—not in that he was held up by the heels and oiled with piston-oiling technique, but because from that moment on, his father has had a very special feeling for him All normal fathers love their children, we will assume. They all feel a responsibility toward them But—and I think I am not being merely sentimental when I say this—that early, primitive responsibility that devolved upon Ralph toward Rufus left its mark. Fatherhood is necessarily a less intimate relationship—physically at least—than motherhood; but Ralph can't think of himself only as the guy who buys Rufus' food and clothes and administers spankings. Fundamentally he is always the guy who tied his cord and greased him, when there was no one else to do it. That is something I wouldn't want Rufus deprived of, for all the hospital treatment in the world

Nor can I bring myself to believe that our children are hopelessly handicapped because they take baths in washtubs in front of the kitchen range, read by the light of kerosene lamps, and sleep in unheated bedrooms We'll

give them a bathroom and steam heat and electric lights when we get the house rebuilt; but perhaps we'll be making a mistake. Soft living isn't important to them now, because it never has been. They're never going to be miserable because of physical inconveniences. Perhaps the best thing we can give them in a world where the possession of material things becomes more and more precarious, in a world of marching armies and destruction-dealing skies, i a *tough-fibered indifference* to heat and cold and comfor and discomfort

What can we give our children then, that won't be outmoded that won't under some eventuality that we can't foresee, prove to be a handicap to them? I don't know the answer to that one. Once I would have said "Ideas and Ideals." But I grew up in the years after the first World War, when perpetual peace was supposed to be the easily attainable ideal. I was trained in that ideal, and I believed in it with all the sincerity of which I was capable. Perhaps it is still attainable—but if it is, it will be by some different means than those I was taught to trust in. I don't want my child ever to feel as lost in the world as I do right now; nor do I want to inculcate in him the doctrine of force and aggression at no matter what sacrifice of the rights of others.

We can give him a happy childhood to remember, a way of life that he will be willing to die to protect, if the need arises. That sounds like a grim and Spartan gift to a little boy, but it's not as dangerous a gift as the belief in pacifism and universal well-wishing to which my generation was exposed. I don't want to raise my son to be a soldier—but if he has to be one, I want him to be a good and capable one. I want him to know what he's fighting for—and Freedom and Democracy won't mean a thing to him, unless they are all tied up with memories of things that he has loved ever since he can remember—things like

That blank percent of the homes in America have no running water?

That blank percent have no bathrooms?

That blank percent of our children are born with no doctor in attendance?

These appalling figures show that the huge army of the underprivileged—

I cluck my tongue, suitably appalled for a moment until true realization hits me between the eyes. "My God," I think, and then I am truly appalled "That's *us* they're talking about! Why—*we're* the underprivileged! Why—Why—"

But are we? I'm not stupid enough to recommend that all, or even any, children be born with only their fathers in attendance. But because it happened to Rufus doesn't make him underprivileged In fact, I would say he was especially privileged—not in that he was held up by the heels and oiled with piston-oiling technique, but because from that moment on, his father has had a very special feeling for him. All normal fathers love their children, we will assume. They all feel a responsibility toward them But—and I think I am not being merely sentimental when I say this—that early, primitive responsibility that devolved upon Ralph toward Rufus left its mark. Fatherhood is necessarily a less intimate relationship—physically at least—than motherhood; but Ralph can't think of himself only as the guy who buys Rufus' food and clothes and administers spankings. Fundamentally he is always the guy who tied his cord and greased him, when there was no one else to do it. That is something I wouldn't want Rufus deprived of, for all the hospital treatment in the world.

Nor can I bring myself to believe that our children are hopelessly handicapped because they take baths in washtubs in front of the kitchen range, read by the light of kerosene lamps, and sleep in unheated bedrooms. We'll

able to share, but which will affect him. Sometimes I get a clue. Sometimes I see him lay his hand on a rock with a special gesture, or I find a piece of broken china that he has carefully hidden away, or I hear him talking to himself about a rabbit. But since I, myself, loathe nothing quite so much as having someone prying into my thoughts and feelings, there is nothing I can do but wonder.

I wonder, too, if all the houses he ever reads about in books will be this house, just as all the houses I read about are in the end the house in which I grew up. It was a low, white, old-fashioned house, and some of the houses in books are huge mansions. But no matter how carefully the author explains the arrangement of the rooms, no matter if he goes to the trouble of drawing a floor plan, when his characters go from the drawing-room down long corridors into the dining hall, in my mind's eye they pass from our little living-room through a door to the left directly into the low square room where we ate. I only hope that Rufus won't spend his life picturing lords and ladies taking baths in the middle of the kitchen.

Of course the biggest problem we encounter in bringing up our children in the woods is their formal education. They do have to go to school. Even if there weren't laws requiring their attendance, even if we were quite capable —which we aren't—of giving them a solid foundation in the three R's, we would still have to send them. One of the most important parts of education is learning to get along with other people, and we just can't supply a society of their peers for them to rub up against. Rufus has seen so few children of his own age that he has no idea how to act with them. He lets them walk all over him, he's so happy to be with them. So we'll shortly have to ship him out to his grandmother's where he will learn among other things, I hope, to stand up for his rights. It's going to be

the sound of the river, and the way Kyak lies and dreams in front of the open fire on a crisp autumn evening, and the picnics we've held at Smooth Ledge. The name of his country won't be worth fighting for, unless he can remember from experience that his country is the place, not of equal opportunity, not of universal suffrage, not of any of those lofty conceptions so far above a little boy's ability to comprehend, but the place where he walked with his father down a woods road one evening and saw a doe and twin fawns; or the place where he came in from playing in the snow and found the kitchen warm and fragrant and his mother making pop-corn balls.

That's all that I can give him; that's all that I dare to try to give him—something that he will love enough to want to preserve it for himself and others against whatever danger may threaten from whatever quarter, and the toughness and courage with which to fight for it. To bring him up untouched by war, insofar as is possible in a world where no one is completely unaffected by war today, is about the only contribution that I know how to make for the future.

Even here I am working in the dark He won't remember the things I expect him to remember I don't remember from my own childhood the important things that happened; but I can recall a hole in the ground among the roots of a maple tree that grew in front of our house. It was a small hole, about as big as a pint measure, but there was something about it It was moist and smelled of earth and water when I lay on my stomach and thrust my four-year-old face into it It was everything that was mysterious and marvellous to me then, and somehow it still is I couldn't have explained to anyone then what that little hole in the ground meant to me, and I still can't. But the memory of it makes me wonder what Rufus is carrying around in his head that he can't share, and never will be

closed to the public for the occasion. When she was sixteen, her birthday party was held in the Allens' kitchen—open to the public for the occasion, I judge. Apparently everyone in town attended. As far as I can tell, she enjoyed both parties equally.

The school in Upton is a two-room school, and I'd forgotten that such a thing existed. If I'd remembered it, I would have delivered a speech beginning, "Well, in this day and age, with all the fine schools available, no child of mine—". I would have been wrong. Sally learns as much, if not more, in what is known as the Upstairs Room, where Grades 7 to 10 inclusive sit under one teacher, as she could possibly learn in the biggest and best-equipped school in the country. Her Mr. Flanders is a very good teacher. The excellence of a teacher has nothing at all to do with his background, or the amount of salary he is paid, or anything else except his own personality and inherent bent. A good teacher is born, I am convinced, and his presence would make a good school out of a woodshed.

But Sally gets more than book learning out of going to school in Upton. She gets, for the first time in her life, the sense of being a member in a community. This is a thing more easily acquired in a small town than in a large one, and it's very important to feel, I believe, that you are a member of a whole. There's time enough, later, to be an individual. Later, when she gets out into the world, she will be "different" because she went to a rural school. It will make a good story. It will set her apart. We all want something to set us apart from the rest, to make us interesting. It doesn't have to be very much. I, myself, derive a great deal of satisfaction from the fact that I'm the only person I ever encountered who grew up in a family where they had family prayers every morning after breakfast. My sister and I are probably the only people in the world who grew up in a household where the immutable winter Sun-

rather a painful experience, so the sooner he gets it over with the better.

I certainly hope the school authorities don't start out by giving him an Intelligence Test before he's learned the ropes. If they do, his I.Q. will be about 50. (I don't believe in I.Q.'s anyhow. My own is up in the near-genius group, and nobody knows better than I the abysmal depths of dumbness I can plumb. I just happen to have a very good memory for the sort of things they ask on Intelligence Tests.) But poor Rufus! All the questions dealing with such common things as running water, electric lights, hens, and railroad trains will leave him completely in the dark, and they don't ask how to tell a fox track from a dog track —a difficult thing that he can do easily—or how to use a birch hook, or how to employ a cant dog to its utmost efficiency I suppose that is what the textbooks dismiss blandly as Feeble-mindedness by Deprivation.

Sally's education has been somewhat peculiar. The first twelve years of her life she lived in Southern Illinois and attended school regularly Then she came with us for a while. Just as she was getting used to our peculiar mode of life, her mother sent for her to come to Liechtenstein—a small country between Switzerland and Austria, in case you didn't know—and she spent two years there and in the West Indies. She didn't go to school at all, but she was being educated, nonetheless. She learned, among other things, not to giggle when a Count kissed her hand, no matter how much it tickled, how to get through the customs with the least trouble, how to wear clothes, and how to order a meal in German. Then came the War, and Sally came back to us. She goes to school in Upton now, boarding with the Allens, who are among Ralph's oldest friends. She certainly ought to be adaptable. She's had a varied enough experience. I think that she is. When she was fifteen, her birthday party was held in the bar of a hotel in Haiti,

rather a painful experience, so the sooner he gets it over with the better.

I certainly hope the school authorities don't start out by giving him an Intelligence Test before he's learned the ropes. If they do, his I.Q. will be about 50. (I don't believe in I.Q.'s anyhow. My own is up in the near-genius group, and nobody knows better than I the abysmal depths of dumbness I can plumb. I just happen to have a very good memory for the sort of things they ask on Intelligence Tests.) But poor Rufus! All the questions dealing with such common things as running water, electric lights, hens, and railroad trains will leave him completely in the dark, and they don't ask how to tell a fox track from a dog track —a difficult thing that he can do easily—or how to use a birch hook, or how to employ a cant dog to its utmost efficiency I suppose that is what the textbooks dismiss blandly as Feeble-mindedness by Deprivation.

Sally's education has been somewhat peculiar. The first twelve years of her life she lived in Southern Illinois and attended school regularly Then she came with us for a while. Just as she was getting used to our peculiar mode of life, her mother sent for her to come to Liechtenstein—a small country between Switzerland and Austria, in case you didn't know—and she spent two years there and in the West Indies She didn't go to school at all, but she was being educated, nonetheless She learned, among other things, not to giggle when a Count kissed her hand, no matter how much it tickled, how to get through the customs with the least trouble, how to wear clothes, and how to order a meal in German. Then came the War, and Sally came back to us. She goes to school in Upton now, boarding with the Allens, who are among Ralph's oldest friends She certainly ought to be adaptable. She's had a varied enough experience. I think that she is. When she was fifteen, her birthday party was held in the bar of a hotel in Haiti,

"What Do You Do With All Your Spare Time?"

THIS IS WHAT I CAN'T DECIDE:—WHETHER I DON'T HAVE any spare time at all, or whether most of my time is spare time. Spare time, as I used to understand it, was the time left over from doing the necessary, unpleasant things, like correcting Sophomore English themes or washing out silk stockings in the bathroom. It was the time I frittered away on useless, entertaining pursuits, like the movies or contract bridge. Now almost everything I do—except cooking—is fun, and it is also useful. There is no line of demarcation between work and play. It makes it hard to explain what I do with my spare time.

Take the matter of smelting, for example. I happen to be among those who consider going smelting a form of sport. Gerrish agrees with me, but Ralph thinks it's hard work. Therefore, since someone has to stay home and mind the fires, he's the one to do it, while Gerrish and I sally forth into the night.

Smelts are not, unfortunately, the most co-operative of fish. In this country they're about the size of average sardines—the Norwegian kind—and normally they live deep in the lakes, where you never see them. In the spring, however, after the ice is out of the brooks but before the lakes break up, they run up into the brook mouths to spawn. We stand on the bank with dip nets, dip them out into pails, take them home, and eat them. The hitch—and never let anyone tell you that Nature hands over anything without a string attached—is that they don't start running until

day morning breakfast was oyster stew. Ralph says now that he wishes that on the night of Rufus' birth he'd thought to move me out into his work shop. It couldn't have been any colder than the bedroom was, and Rufus might then have had the distinction of being the last American child to be born in a log cabin. Not that it would have made any difference—unless he wants to run for the Presidency of the United States some time, which God forbid—but it would have been something to talk about. That's what I mean.

So Sally, some night in the future when she's sitting in the Stork Club all done up in gold lamé—also God forbid—can smile reminiscently and say, "You know, I got my education in a rural school in the backwoods of Maine." I think the effect will be very piquant.

Right now, though, she's having too much fun to worry about being different. She belongs to the 4H Club, and goes to church and teaches a Sunday School class of infants, and has a boy-friend. In fact, she has a different one every time we see her, practically, which makes it nice. If she stuck to one I'd probably think I had to worry about its being serious. In short, she's living the usual life of a small town American girl, only she's getting a lot more out of it than most small town girls do. She's been around enough to value it at its true worth.

Probably I ought to be able to draw some valuable deductions and conclusions from my special set of circumstances in regard to the problem of child-raising. I'm sorry to say that I can't. The only conclusion that I've come to is pretty general and pretty trite All any parent can do is to stagger along as best he is able, and trust to luck

after dark, and they're extremely coy about the whole thing You can never tell what night or what time of night they'll pick to run, so you have to be there every night.

We do our smelting at the Head of the Pond, where the upper river empties into it. That's almost two miles from the house, and of course the road is deep in soggy snow at that time of year, so we have to walk. Right after supper Gerrish and I start out, leaving the dishes for Ralph to do, because if we are going to get there before dark, so that we can collect fuel for a fire to keep warm by, we've got no time to waste. It wouldn't be so bad if we had only ourselves to consider, but we have to take lanterns and buckets and nets—fine-meshed dip nets attached to long handles. The walking is terrible, the kind of walking where you can go along fine for a few steps on an old snowshoe float, and then you sink in suddenly to your knees. It's much harder and more nerve-racking than just plain wallowing to your waist at every step, but if you leave the road and start wading in the soft snow at the side, you find there is a foot of running ice water underlying it, and that your boots aren't quite a foot high It's a most disconcerting discovery to make.

After a while, though, we get there, coming out of the gloom of the path through the pines onto the shore of the Pond. The snow has shrunk back from the water, here where the sun can reach, and the ice has receded beneath the insistent attack of the current from the river We stand on bare gray rocks and look out over an open stretch of fretted gray water to the dirty white line of the ice pack. All the delicate and subtle coloring that is a part of the winter landscape—the faded gold of dead grass heads, the fine red lines of the stems of low bushes, the orange of a fungus on a stump, the lavender of distance—has been drained away by the dusk that lies on the surface of the Pond and the darkness that lurks in the enfolding hills.

of the lanterns, and we call back and forth to each other, "Come over here! There's millions of them—" or "How're you doing over there?" We get excited and careless, and misjudge the depth of the water, so that our boots are soon full. But it doesn't make any difference. The pails are filling, too, and the smelts are running thicker than ever. Gerrish freezes suddenly, like a dog going into a point. "Gosh, I think I heard a salmon jump! Let's come over here early tomorrow night and bring our rods." I agree. Suddenly I don't see how I can wait until even tomorrow to feel a three-pound salmon fighting on the other end of a line.

The pails are full. We put out the fire, leave the nets and one of the lanterns, and start home. It is inky black in the woods, and sooner or later, usually sooner, whichever is carrying the remaining lantern falls down and breaks the chimney. Then we flounder around an interminable time, running into trees, falling down and spilling the smelts, gathering them up by the light of matches—until the matches give out—and listening to the loons laugh with a laughter that suddenly has an extremely personal note to it. Eventually, we see the lights of home, and stagger in, exhausted.

Why is this so much fun? I don't know. It just is, if you happen to like it. Even if you don't, it's worth while to go smelting. After the winter's diet, the first fresh fish of the year tastes wonderful. Gerrish and Ralph clean them for me, cutting the heads off and slitting the bellies, and I dip them in a thin batter and fry them in deep fat until they're brown and crisp. They look like French-fried potatoes, and served with lemon juice or tartare sauce, taste like manna. We have them every day during the brief fortnight they are running.

The very last time that we go, Gerrish and I always bring home twenty or thirty live ones in a pail of water

keep out rain and snow. The rain and snow doesn't do any harm, but it makes that much more water to evaporate before we have syrup. Our evaporating pans are a series of large shallow cookie pans, which we put on the kitchen stove top. They're the reason why I don't like the sugaring-off season. Every time I want to put a stick of wood in the stove, or toast a slice of bread, or heat a flat iron, or fry an egg, I have to move one of those damn syrup pans. If I hang up a pair of mittens over the stove to dry, the chances are that sooner or later they'll fall into a syrup pan. Briefly, the whole thing is a nuisance, and before we're through, I wish to Heaven I'd never heard of maple syrup.

It's nice to eat, though, on griddle cakes, for supper. Sometimes we boil it down a little more, beyond the aproning consistency which is the standard weight for syrup—syrup is said to apron when it runs off the side of a spoon in a solid sheet, or apron, instead of in rivulets—and pour it hot onto dishes of snow. It congeals as it cools to a thick gumminess, and is wonderful to chew on. It's fun to give it to Kyak for he loves its sweetness so, but at the same time gets his jaws all stuck up, to our great amusement. This over-cooked syrup makes a marvellous sauce for vanilla ice-cream, too. A common country dessert that we sometimes have is fresh raised doughnuts and hot, new syrup. Each member of the family has a cereal dish of syrup, and dips the doughnut into it as he eats. This is not very elegant, but it's very good. Lots of people have hot baking-powder biscuits with butter and new syrup for breakfast, during the syrup season, instead of the more conventional griddle cakes and syrup. Probably this is good, too. I wouldn't know. I have trouble enough getting breakfast on the table without going into hot baking-powder biscuits.

I know one man who drinks a full cup of new syrup every night before he goes to bed, for its medicinal prop-

As spring moves into summer, the berries start getting ripe. All through the woods, wherever there is enough of a clearing to let the sun in, acres and acres of raspberries and blueberries come into fruit. I never can quite believe that this dour and grudging country has suddenly suffered such a complete reversal of form. This princely generosity seems just too good to be true I feel we must go berrying right now, right this minute, before all the berries vanish again

Ralph loathes picking berries I used to try to sell him on the idea that since for once we were getting something for free, it was his duty— But my wifely pep-talks never raised his enthusiasm above a Laodicean luke-warmness, which started cooling the first time he tripped and stretched his six-feet-two in a bramble patch, and from then on declined rapidly to absolute zero So I gave up. He just isn't the type. Fortunately, Gerrish is the type.

Gerrish always refers to me as She, just as he always refers to Ralph as The Boss He'll say to Ralph, "She claims She wants to go ras'berryin' t'morrer mornin', so if you ain't got nothin' special in mind—"

Ralph never has. He's only too thankful that I don't try to enlist him

To get to the best raspberry patch, we have to take a boat and row about a mile across the Pond to where the dead stub of an old "punkin" pine stands on a ridge, dwarfing with its towering height the by no means insignificant growth along the shore From the boat, the shore line is an unbroken wall of forest, but we know that if we land near a maple a little to the left of the stub, and scramble up a steep, spruce-covered slope to the foot of the pumpkin pine, we'll come out into an old, overgrown birch cutting Here the raspberries grow on tall rank canes among the rocks and fallen trees and rotten birch tops and around clumps of young spruce and fir. It is a quiet

of unrelated metal, old wool, wiping rags, coffee cans, broken hack saw blades, a divorced work glove or two, parts of a dog team harness, lengths of fish line, a coil or two of synthetic gut leaders (known woodswise as "sympathetic gut"), and some odd wooden wedges. It's a mess, but it's better to have this one big mess in the corner of the kitchen than a patina of messiness spread all over the house. I didn't, by the way, name the culch corner. Culch is the New England word for that clutter of partly worn-out or obsolete objects that always gathers, like moss, on a non-rolling household I don't know who first used the term culch corner, but it stuck. Now we all call it that.

It's nice to be down in the summer house again. There's more space to move around in, and the river is nearer and louder. We wake up in the night and hear it, and for a night or two mistake it for the sound of wind and rain. But real rain is different. It starts slowly, with individual drops striking the roof only three feet over our heads, in an almost ceremonial roulade. Then it comes faster and faster, with the full symphonic orchestration of rising wind in the trees and the river's roar. The walls of the summer house are not ceiled like those of the winter house, and the storm seems much nearer to us when we're living down there. Paradoxically, this makes us feel that much warmer, and safer, and more protected.

There's always one thing I forget on moving day. We manage to shift all the favorite chairs, and the lamps, and the radio, and the typewriters, and footstools, and personal belongings, and ash trays. But come bed-time, Ralph always says, "Where's my sleeping hat?" He thinks his head gets cold at night without it, although he goes around bareheaded all day. It's always in the same place—hanging on the head of the bed in the winter house bedroom. Sometime I'm going to establish a record and remember it—unless he establishes the same record first.

of unrelated metal, old wool, wiping rags, coffee cans, broken hack saw blades, a divorced work glove or two, parts of a dog team harness, lengths of fish line, a coil or two of synthetic gut leaders (known woodswise as "sympathetic gut"), and some odd wooden wedges. It's a mess, but it's better to have this one big mess in the corner of the kitchen than a patina of messiness spread all over the house. I didn't, by the way, name the culch corner. Culch is the New England word for that clutter of partly worn-out or obsolete objects that always gathers, like moss, on a non-rolling household I don't know who first used the term culch corner, but it stuck. Now we all call it that.

It's nice to be down in the summer house again There's more space to move around in, and the river is nearer and louder. We wake up in the night and hear it, and for a night or two mistake it for the sound of wind and rain. But real rain is different. It starts slowly, with individual drops striking the roof only three feet over our heads, in an almost ceremonial roulade. Then it comes faster and faster, with the full symphonic orchestration of rising wind in the trees and the river's roar. The walls of the summer house are not ceiled like those of the winter house, and the storm seems much nearer to us when we're living down there. Paradoxically, this makes us feel that much warmer, and safer, and more protected

There's always one thing I forget on moving day. We manage to shift all the favorite chairs, and the lamps, and the radio, and the typewriters, and footstools, and personal belongings, and ash trays. But come bed-time, Ralph always says, "Where's my sleeping hat?" He thinks his head gets cold at night without it, although he goes around bareheaded all day. It's always in the same place—hanging on the head of the bed in the winter house bedroom. Sometime I'm going to establish a record and remember it—unless he establishes the same record first.

I don't know where Gerrish goes after he shakes me. I keep away from the south side of the cutting. That is, by tacit consent, his stamping ground. I don't even know what's over there I have my own beat to patrol, working slowly up a vague remnant of hauling road near the middle of the clearing to the top of the ridge, and coming back down along the edge of the woods on the north side. At the top of the loop the earth is thin and shallow and the bushes aren't very big or productive, but I always go there just the same. There is an outcropping of ledge there, gray and weathered and warm with sun under the hand. I love stone. I won't try to explain why, because I don't know But everybody loves the feel and quality and essence of some material. It may be leather, or wood, or fine porcelain. It may be satin or bronze or tweed. Whatever it is, there is almost a spiritual kinship between that substance and that person. That's the way I feel about stone, and that's why I always go up to the top of the raspberry patch.

We're not the only ones that pick berries. The birds eat them of course, and the foxes Bears love them. One day I followed in the path of a bear down my north side of the cut I could see by the bent bushes where he'd been ambling happily along, stripping the canes as he went, minding his own business and thinking his own thoughts, even as I was doing Suddenly I came to a place that looked as though a tornado had hit it The undergrowth was all flattened out the ground was torn up, and a couple of saplings were broken off Right smack in the middle of the devastation, dangling from a low branch, was what was left of a big hornets' nest, gutted and destroyed by one furious sweep of a huge paw The poor old cuss had evidently been attacked by a squadron of dive bombers before he knew what it was all about. I could see where he had started for the Pond He certainly hadn't stood on the

place, sheltered from the wind, and when we arrive there early in the morning, it is wet with dew and laced with long shadows from the surrounding forest. It is cool and full of the stir of birds and the scoldings of red squirrels and little striped chipmunks. That's why we always go there early. Later, when the sun is high, the place is like a furnace, breathless and so hot that even the birds and squirrels reture to the shade of the woods. It is silent then, and dead, except for the hum of insects; but the heat and stillness account for the size and quality of the berries. If you stand still and listen, you can almost hear them grow, swelling and stretching as the rich red juice fills them.

The minute we get into the clearing, I find that I am alone. Gerrish has vanished. I hear a dry stick snap somewhere, but the bushes are so high I can't see him. It would be useless to call. He wouldn't answer. Like me, when he goes berrying, he wants to berry, not stand around doing what he calls "jawrin'." When his pail is full, he'll whistle and I'll go down and meet him at the boat. My pail will lack a half an inch of being full. Gerrish takes a proper pride in being the best and fastest picker he ever saw, and there's nothing I can do about it, try as I will.

The raspberries hang on the underside of the canes, glowing like jewels against the green of the leaves. They are dead ripe, and will drop off at the lightest touch Raspberries are the most care-demanding of all berries to pick. They mash easily, so they must be handled lightly. Even setting the pail down too often and too hard will result in a shapeless mush in the bottom. That's why Gerrish and I suspend our pails from our belts, thus we'll have both hands free to pick and avoid constant jarring of the berries. The canes have to be lifted delicately. It's infuriating to raise one and have all the fruit tumble off to be lost among the rocks and debris on the ground.

inch slices, which I put cut-side-down in the pan. I bake in a hot oven and serve hot with milk or cream and the hot cooked berries from the bottom of the pan. It's nothing, really, to write home about, but it accomplishes its purpose, which is to keep the family from hollering too loudly and long about the inferior desserts that are being handed out to them recently

Blueberries are more common and therefore much less highly esteemed than raspberries. We don't have to go on any boat trips to get plenty of blueberries. They grow all along the Carry Road, and in a half an hour I can pick enough for a couple of pies, some blueberry muffins, and a little spiced blueberry jam. The only trick about pies is to add a little salt and lemon juice to the berries to give them zip Blueberries are apt to be flat The only trick about blueberry muffins is to roll the berries in flour so they won't sink in a sodden mass to the bottom of the batter. Blueberry jam is easy to make. Add sugar to the blueberries, pound for pound, and boil until the mixture starts to thicken. Then add cinnamon, nutmeg, and allspice—a pinch of each to the pound—and pour into glasses It jellies readily—I think there must be a lot of natural pectin in blueberries—and is good with hot or cold roasts and fowl.

There are plenty of other things to do, too, to fill in spare time Before the ice goes out all the boats and the canoe have to be overhauled and painted Usually one or more of the boats has sprung a leak somewhere and we have to find out just where and repair it. Usually, too, someone during the preceding season—probably I—has left a boat improperly secured on a windward shore, and it has chafed badly on the rocks This rough spot has to be sandpapered smooth and oiled before the painting can begin. Any broken thwarts and gunwales have to be mended, and missing irons replaced and oarlocks re-

order of his going either. Every jump must have been ten feet long. I'd like to have seen him, clearing rocks and bushes and fallen trees like a bird on the wing. There, but for the Grace of God, might have gone Louise Rich. Well, better him than me. I have only two legs, and it would have broken my heart to have had to jettison a pail half full of raspberries.

On the way back across the Pond, I always think about the delicious jam and preserves I'm going to make out of our twelve or fifteen quarts of berries. This is purely mental exercise, but it makes me feel smug and thrifty, and I might as well enjoy the feeling while I can. In our family everybody, even the dog, will eat raspberries until their eyes pop, so there aren't ever enough left after twenty-four hours to do anything fancy with. I do, though, usually manage to squeeze out a couple of pies, making a special effort to have the crust flaky and sprinkling flour over the berries lightly before baking to prevent the juices all stewing out. Too much flour is bad. It takes all the juice up. With the remnants of crust I make turn-overs for between-meal snacks. If the weather is sultry and the berries start to mold, I stew them up with sugar for supper-sauce, to be eaten with cake or cookies. Then if there are still some left, I make jam, to be put away against the winter.

There is really only one dessert to be made out of raspberries, when there aren't enough to go around. This is a sort of cooked up-side-down shortcake. In the bottom of a cake pan I melt a little butter, add about a half a cup of sugar, and a cup or two of raspberries—whatever I have left after saving out a cupful. Then I mix up a good short biscuit dough, using two cups of flour, four teaspoons of baking powder, a generous third of a cup of shortening and a half a cup of milk. This I roll out about a half an inch thick, cover with the raspberries I've held out and some more sugar, roll up into a jelly roll, and slice into

paired. Anchor ropes have to be examined for frayed places, and Ralph's trick anchor control gadgets have to be gone over to see that they are in working order. These rigs, which he invented and made himself, are very clever. The rope feeds over a pulley wheel in a bracket bolted on the bow and back through a special casting attached to the rower's seat, which allows the rope to be locked anywhere by a cam lever. If you're handling a boat along in a current, jockeying for the right fly-casting position, it's a great advantage to be able to drop your anchor without leaving the seat or missing a stroke. It's also a great advantage, when you have somehow become involved with a six-pound salmon who is either going to break your rod or run your line all out unless you do something and do it fast, to be able to up-anchor without putting your rod down.

I like to paint boats. Ours are all painted the same, like our houses, which are a soft Nile green with buff doors and window sashes. Our boats are green outside and buff inside. The basic principle—to put on several thin coats instead of one thick coat—applies to boats as well as to any other paint job, and you have to be careful not to let drops form along the edges of the strakes. But after a while you can paint automatically and let your mind wander where it will. It's sunny and sheltered down on the boat float, and it's a nice place to be in the early spring. The birches along the shore of the Pond are beginning to show the faint and tender green that is so different from the black-green of the conifers, and the maples are blossoming red. The water, in the patches where the ice has gone out, is a deep indigo blue, and the ice pack in the distance is a line of snowy white. The wind smells of spring.

Ralph spends the before-break-up period, which is also the period when the road is hub deep in mud and therefore impassable for anything but foot traffic, in overhaul-

could do it all right the next time. I can follow printed directions fairly well, so the idea was that I would follow the book and Gerrish would follow me, and in that way we'd both learn. We both did, but what started out as a hobby became almost an obsession, especially with Gerrish. He's a rabid fly tier now, and I might add, a very good one He makes a much better fly than I do, for all that his hands are bigger and look clumsier than mine The heads of his flies are small and smooth, while mine sometimes get beyond me and turn out large and rough That's where the amateur betrays himself.

We thought at first that we'd be satisfied if we could make a few streamers and some of the simpler stock patterns of wet flies. We weren't going into anything complicated. We weren't even going to consider tying dry flies We knew our own limitations Neither of us was going to invest a lot of money in equipment. Ralph had a small vise he'd lend us, and I had nail scissors and some odds and ends of embroidery silk and yarn for bodies There was plenty of black thread around the house, and some silver and gold string left over from Christmas wrappings, and Ralph had some beeswax in his sailmaker's outfit. He also had shellac, and we could probably find plenty of feathers and fur around the woods All we'd have to buy was two or three dozen hooks and maybe a few feathers not indigenous to this soil, such as jungle cocks for eyes We wouldn't have to spend more than fifty cents, all told. That's what we thought, at first.

That state of mind lasted about a month During that month we saw everything in the light of possible fly-tying material. We brought home dead birds, and the tails of deceased flying squirrels we found, and quills out of other people's feather dusters. We clipped stiff fur from Kyak to make buck tails, and went hunting with my .22 revolver for red squirrels. (We never managed to get one.) We

could do it all right the next time. I can follow printed directions fairly well, so the idea was that I would follow the book and Gerrish would follow me, and in that way we'd both learn. We both did, but what started out as a hobby became almost an obsession, especially with Gerrish. He's a rabid fly tier now, and I might add, a very good one. He makes a much better fly than I do, for all that his hands are bigger and look clumsier than mine. The heads of his flies are small and smooth, while mine sometimes get beyond me and turn out large and rough. That's where the amateur betrays himself.

We thought at first that we'd be satisfied if we could make a few streamers and some of the simpler stock patterns of wet flies. We weren't going into anything complicated. We weren't even going to consider tying dry flies. We knew our own limitations. Neither of us was going to invest a lot of money in equipment. Ralph had a small vise he'd lend us, and I had nail scissors and some odds and ends of embroidery silk and yarn for bodies. There was plenty of black thread around the house, and some silver and gold string left over from Christmas wrappings, and Ralph had some beeswax in his sailmaker's outfit. He also had shellac, and we could probably find plenty of feathers and fur around the woods. All we'd have to buy was two or three dozen hooks and maybe a few feathers not indigenous to this soil, such as jungle cocks for eyes. We wouldn't have to spend more than fifty cents, all told. That's what we thought, at first.

That state of mind lasted about a month. During that month we saw everything in the light of possible fly-tying material. We brought home dead birds, and the tails of deceased flying squirrels we found, and quills out of other people's feather dusters. We clipped stiff fur from Kyak to make buck tails, and went hunting with my .22 revolver for red squirrels. (We never managed to get one.) We

could do it all right the next time. I can follow printed directions fairly well, so the idea was that I would follow the book and Gerrish would follow me, and in that way we'd both learn. We both did, but what started out as a hobby became almost an obsession, especially with Gerrish. He's a rabid fly tier now, and I might add, a very good one. He makes a much better fly than I do, for all that his hands are bigger and look clumsier than mine. The heads of his flies are small and smooth, while mine sometimes get beyond me and turn out large and rough That's where the amateur betrays himself.

We thought at first that we'd be satisfied if we could make a few streamers and some of the simpler stock patterns of wet flies. We weren't going into anything complicated. We weren't even going to consider tying dry flies We knew our own limitations Neither of us was going to invest a lot of money in equipment. Ralph had a small vise he'd lend us, and I had nail scissors and some odds and ends of embroidery silk and yarn for bodies. There was plenty of black thread around the house, and some silver and gold string left over from Christmas wrappings, and Ralph had some beeswax in his sailmaker's outfit. He also had shellac, and we could probably find plenty of feathers and fur around the woods All we'd have to buy was two or three dozen hooks and maybe a few feathers not indigenous to this soil, such as jungle cocks for eyes. We wouldn't have to spend more than fifty cents, all told. That's what we thought, at first.

That state of mind lasted about a month During that month we saw everything in the light of possible fly-tying material. We brought home dead birds, and the tails of deceased flying squirrels we found, and quills out of other people's feather dusters We clipped stiff fur from Kyak to make buck tails, and went hunting with my .22 revolver for red squirrels (We never managed to get one) We

hounded chance acquaintances from Upton to bring cou-hen feathers and hackle feathers from roosters the [illegible] time they came. And we tied up enough Plymouth Rock streamers to last us a lifetime. We had plenty of Plymouth Rock feathers, you see Then we faced the truth. The bug had got us We'd have to buy some more equipment—not very much, of course, just a few necessary things. After all, this was partly an economy measure. We'd just spend a dollar or two

Last spring our feather bill was over fifteen dollars. We'd already spent five or six dollars on special scissors, a pair of hackle pliers, a bottle of head varnish, a special wax preparation, and a box of assorted hooks. Heaven knows what our bill would have been if some friends hadn't presented us with a fly-tying vise That's what fly tying can do to you It can make you lose all sense of proportion We even lost our pride When a professional fly tier, Frank Walker, of Oxford Maine, came to stay at Miller's that summer and offered to show us a few tricks of the trade, we forgot all about our lofty ideas of independence, and spent all one Sunday afternoon with him He's an old man, and he's tied thousands of flies over the course of years He's found short cuts and practical methods that the books never dreamed of, and that it would have taken us twenty years to dope out for ourselves And even if I never intended to tie a fly in my life I would have enjoyed watching him work It was really something to see him tie a Black Gnat on a No 14 hook with his big hands, a little stiff from rheumatism, moving slowly and delicately and surely around the almost invisible little object in the vise. Great skill and competence in any line is always impressive.

It's hard to tell exactly where the great fascination of tying flies lies Of course, there is the satisfaction in creative work It's fun to take a pile of raw materials and make

could thing out of them. The more demanding the work, the greater is the satisfaction. It's fun to finish shellacking the head of a fly, hold it up, and be able to think, "There! I'll bet nobody could tell that from a bought fly!" You feel so pleased with yourself.

But that's only the beginning. People are easy to fool. The real test comes when you try the fly out on a fish. If you can catch a fish on a fly you tied yourself, then you can commence to regard yourself as a fly tier. Still, there are always a few fool fish about that will rise to anything, so it's better to get several strikes on the fly before you indulge in too much own-back patting. But that isn't the end, either. Pretty soon you start regarding the copying of the proven, standard patterns as mere tyro's work. Anybody can copy a fly, you think. Most people know the Yellow May is good at this time of year in these waters. So there's nothing remarkable about catching a good fish on a Yellow May, no matter who tied it. Now if you could think up a new pattern that would catch fish, that would really be something

So you start watching the fish. Tonight they're rising to some silvery gray little bugs that are flying up the river. If you could tie a fly that looked something like that, with perhaps a touch of yellow in the body— You reel in and go home. By working fast, you can get it done in time to try it out before dark Perhaps it won't catch fish. All right; maybe if you used a little tinsel in the tail— There's no end to it, as you can see And there's no feeling quite like the lift you get when eventually you hit on the right combination, and a walloping big trout comes surging up out of the shadows and grabs your very own fly, the fly you conceived and executed all by yourself

One of the things that always surprises people who visit us, anticipating, prepared for, or resigned to—according to their various natures—a period of total quiet, is the

number of excursions and alarums which preclude courtchance of monotony. Something is always cropping up, and you never know when you get up in the morning what will have happened before you go to bed at night. It may be nothing more momentous than a visit from the game or the fire warden, but they always have something of interest to offer.

Our fire warden lives with his wife and dog on Pine Island at the upper end of the Narrows between the two Richardson Lakes, and he and Ralph are kindred souls. They both collect junk. Fortunately, where Ralph collects car motors, Amby Hines collects motor boat parts, so they don't chisel in on each other's rackets. I haven't been up at Pine Island lately, but I gather that Amby is running into the same trouble that Ralph is—not enough space to store his loot and a wife that objects to having to clamber over a pile of cold metal when she gets out of bed in the morning. She won't let him make a junk pile out of her boudoir. (I won't let Ralph, either, but he does, just the same.) Amby is really in a worse position than Ralph. The Island isn't very big, and he's used up about all the available space. He's loath to start a boat motor dump on the mainland. "They'll rob 'em off me," he explains matter-of-factly.

The last time he was down, he was having trouble with his dog, a young terrier who had not yet encountered a porcupine. Amby thought, quite rightly, that the sooner the pup got that over with and learned better, the happier they'd all be; but there weren't any porcupines on the Island. However, while patrolling his beat down the Lower Richardson, he stopped in at Spirit Island, where a group of boys were camping, and found that they'd caught a porcupine and had it in a box. It is against the law to confine a wild animal without official permission, although ordinarily Amby wouldn't have bothered

could a porcupine, because he knows that whenever it got ready a porcupine could gnaw its way in half an hour out of any box ever made. This time, however, he needed it himself, so he confiscated it and took it home in a water pail.

When he got to the Island he turned it loose and called his dog. Porcupines are slow and clumsy, but nevertheless it managed to scramble up a tall pine before the dog caught up with it, which is probably just as well for the dog. This was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and the dog sat at the foot of the tree and howled until half past three the next morning, ignoring all commands to come into the house and forget it, and completely shattering any ideas of sleep that the Hineses might have been entertaining. At half past three the dog called it a day and retired under the porch to rest. As soon as the coast was clear, the porcupine came down, swam to the mainland, and vanished. Amby was discouraged when he stopped at our house He had to start his porcupine hunt all over again, and this time he wasn't going to be lucky enough to find one all crated for him

A fire warden has to work hard He has an area to patrol, and he has to see that no one builds a fire within that area, except at State-designated camp grounds. You just can't go into the woods and camp anywhere, for obvious reasons of safety Then if there is a lumbering operation going on, he has to manage to show up in the slashes, unheralded and ghost-like, often enough to deter the men from smoking in the woods This involves a lot of walking in the course of a week, and lots of patrolling around the lakes in a kicker boat. If a forest fire starts in his territory, he has to organize the fighters, and if it's in someone else's territory, he has to go over there and help He has to cooperate with the game warden in seeing that the game laws are observed, although naturally this is a reciprocal

arrangement, and he can call on the game warden for help whenever he needs it. If someone gets lost, they have to join the search, along with whatever talent they can scrape up around the countryside. But the really rush period in a fire warden's life comes when the State does what is colloquially known as "slap a band on the woods."

The band is slapped on whenever there is a protracted drought, and the woods are consequently tinder-dry. Actually the Governor proclaims that the woods are closed to hunters, fishermen, campers, and any other unauthorized persons; in other words, it *bans* use of the forest areas, and forbids building of fires or smoking by anyone whatsoever. The fire warden is like a cat on a hot griddle when a "band" is on. He has to be everywhere at once, telling people to leave the woods immediately, and riding herd on legitimate occupants like us, who belong there, and on himself. Neither he nor we want a forest fire—he, because it's his business not to have one, and we because we naturally don't want to burn up. But you'd be surprised how easy it is, if you are an habitual smoker, suddenly to find yourself in the middle of a dangerous area with a half-smoked cigarette in your hand and no recollection at all of having lighted it. We just stop carrying smoking materials when a "band" is on and so does the warden. If you haven't got them you can't smoke them. The result is that every now and then he appears at our door with the announcement, "My tongue's hanging out for a smoke. Mind if I bum a cigarette and come inside and smoke it?" It's all right to smoke in the house during a "band."

Our game warden, in spite of the fact that he is a respectable married man with four children—including a pair of twins—looks like the scenario writer's dream of the perfect Northwestern Mountie. He wears his uniform with style—he's got the right build for a uniform, with wide shoulders and slim hips—and he walks with a sort

coult-footed swagger. His face is lean and handsome and dark, and he has a tough and reckless air about him. I guess he is tough, if he wants to be. Fortunately, we keep on excellent terms with him, simply by observing the game laws I don't want to sound holy and smug about this, but we do make a point of not breaking them, because we believe in them. In fact we believe some of them are not rigid enough. They are necessary laws and if we weren't convinced that this is so, we'd probably be the worst poachers in the county.

We always ask the game warden how business is, and often he has an unusual arrest to tell us about. He tells a story well A recent adventure happened over on the other side of his territory He was up on a mountain patrolling a closed brook when he came on a boy fishing with his pockets crammed with short trout, about twenty of them Naturally, he took the offender into custody and led him down the mountain to where his car was parked by the road But he saw no reason why he should carry the four or five pounds of illegal fish over the rough trail. Let the guilty party do it The guilty party had other ideas, however, and managed to put them into effect. By the time they had reached the road, he had surreptitiously got rid of the evidence, dropping the little fish quietly at intervals along the trail So there was our Mr. Leon Wilson with a prisoner but with no evidence and no case. He was pretty mad about the whole thing.

But not for long. Presently the boy's father came out of the woods, having apparently been just behind them all the way down, all ignorant of his son's arrest. He didn't notice the bad company his son was keeping. (By most people around here, a game warden is generally considered about the worst company to be found in) "Hey, Bud." he hailed. "You must have a hole in your pocket

I been picking up your fish along the trail for the last couple of miles!" He had the missing illegal fish in his creel.

Ho-hum! Possession is all that needs to be proved against you, according to the law. It didn't make any difference to Leon whom he pinched. Both of them knew better.

We used to set our guests to work helping pull porcupine quills out of the dogs This was when we had five dogs, and ideas about a dog team. They didn't work out. In the first place, it cost more to feed five huskies than to feed the whole Rich tribe. In the second place, we were always in hot water with those darned dogs. Either they'd get loose and chase game, or else they'd scare people going along the road—the dogs were perfectly harmless, but some people are timid—or they'd tear the wash off the line and chew it up And one or the other of them was always coming in full of porcupine quills. They always chose the most inconvenient times for these forays into the sporting life, and you can't postpone a de-quilling operation The longer you wait, the deeper the quills work in, until you can't get them out at all This won't necessarily prove fatal, as often they fester and eventually come out by themselves, after a week or so But if you love your dog—and we loved each and every one of that wolf pack of ours—you can't stand seeing him suffer So we've delayed dinner three hours on occasion to pull quills We've even arisen at one o'clock in the morning and worked until daylight, with me sitting on a dog's head in my nightgown, while Ralph wielded the pliers

We don't have that trouble any more. Thor we had to shoot, because he tried to swallow a porcupine. Cookie, the dearest and smartest dog that ever lived, was struck by lightning Metak and Mukluk we finally had to give away. It doesn't take long to write those four lines, but every word of them represents heartbreak We loved the big

could-footed swagger. His face is lean and handsome and dark, and he has a tough and reckless air about him. I guess he is tough, if he wants to be. Fortunately, we keep on excellent terms with him, simply by observing the game laws I don't want to sound holy and smug about this, but we do make a point of not breaking them, because we believe in them. In fact we believe some of them are not rigid enough. They are necessary laws and if we weren't convinced that this is so, we'd probably be the worst poachers in the county.

We always ask the game warden how business is, and often he has an unusual arrest to tell us about. He tells a story well A recent adventure happened over on the other side of his territory He was up on a mountain patrolling a closed brook when he came on a boy fishing with his pockets crammed with short trout, about twenty of them Naturally, he took the offender into custody and led him down the mountain to where his car was parked by the road But he saw no reason why he should carry the four or five pounds of illegal fish over the rough trail. Let the guilty party do it The guilty party had other ideas, however, and managed to put them into effect. By the time they had reached the road, he had surreptitiously got rid of the evidence, dropping the little fish quietly at intervals along the trail. So there was our Mr. Leon Wilson with a prisoner, but with no evidence and no case. He was pretty mad about the whole thing.

But not for long. Presently the boy's father came out of the woods, having apparently been just behind them all the way down, all ignorant of his son's arrest. He didn't notice the bad company his son was keeping. (By most people around here, a game warden is generally considered about the worst company to be found in.) "Hey, Bud," he hailed. "You must have a hole in your pocket.

just for the dogs, and we fell easy victims to the notion that a dog team was just what we needed and wanted most of anything in the world. This notion was clinched after Norman had ridden us up to Middle a couple of times. It was marvellous just to sit and be whisked up Wangan Hill. Besides, we didn't really need nine dogs, Norman assured us. Five would be plenty

So when, the next spring, Stumpy offered us a husky pup, offspring of one of Norman's team, we accepted with alacrity That was Cookie. From the same source the Millers acquired another husky, Karlok—he was an albino, and one of the most beautiful dogs I have ever seen—so what could be more natural than a match between them when they grew up? The final result was a litter of four pups, of which Kyak was one. And there was our dog team in embryo. Nothing could have been simpler.

The pups grew Norman had told us that when they were about half grown was the time to start training them; so when they were five or six months old, we put them in harness. He had said nothing, though, about the desirability of having an experienced dog with them to show them the ropes So we just hitched them up and told them to mush Cookie looked at us in amazement This was a new game, and one she wasn't sure she liked Kyak lay down on his back and went limp, his legs like boiled macaroni Nothing we could do would get him onto his feet. Every time we stood him up he just collapsed Metak and Richard just stood and shivered Only Mukluk got the idea, and he very soon became bored with pulling not only the light sled we had, but all his relations as well. He finally sat down and looked disgusted, and I didn't blame him.

We might have given up the idea then if Stumpy hadn't made a fevered telephone call from Fitchburg, where he lives Would we give one of his dogs a home? (He was a

bums, even if they did keep us in a continuous turmoil. Now we only have Kyak, the art dog, left. Kyak's stupidity doesn't extend to sticking his own neck out. He ran afoul of a porcupine just once, when he was very young. A great many dogs never learn to leave them alone, but will go through the agonizing experience of quills weekly until the day of their death. Not so Kyak. He'll look, but he's never touched one since that long ago disaster.

I have referred to the dogs and a dog team and I suppose I'd better clear up the matter once and for all. We thought at one time it would be a good idea to have a dog team. In this country the cars go out of use after the deep snows come, there being no possible way of keeping the road open, and that means that every pound of mail and food and material must either be carried on someone's back, or dragged on a hand sled, the two long, hilly miles from Middle Dam to here. And that's no fun. It's really mysterious how a reasonable load of groceries can multiply its weight so enormously in the time it takes to walk it two miles.

The second winter that we lived here, in the middle of February—a very well chosen time, since we were just about fed to the teeth with lugging things on our backs—Stumpy Crocker and Norman Vaughn came in to see us, and they came from below South Arm by dog team. Norman had been a dog driver on Admiral Byrd's first Antarctic Expedition, and he was full of enthusiasm for this particular mode of travel. His team consisted of nine dogs. I had always been led to suppose that huskies were vicious brutes but these nine weren't. They were sweet. Of course, they periodically fought terribly among themselves, but as far as humans were concerned, they were a bunch of softies. Ralph and I fell in love with every last one of them. Our infatuation blinded us to the fact that for three days' stay, Norman brought in over a hundred pounds of food

just for the dogs, and we fell easy victims to the notion that a dog team was just what we needed and wanted most of anything in the world. This notion was clinched after Norman had ridden us up to Middle a couple of times. It was marvellous just to sit and be whisked up Wangan Hill. Besides, we didn't really need nine dogs. Norman assured us. Five would be plenty.

So when, the next spring Stumpy offered us a husky pup, offspring of one of Norman's team, we accepted with alacrity. That was Cookie. From the same source the Millers acquired another husky, Karlok—he was an albino, and one of the most beautiful dogs I have ever seen—so what could be more natural than a match between them when they grew up? The final result was a litter of four pups, of which Kvak was one. And there was our dog team in embryo. Nothing could have been simpler.

The pups grew. Norman had told us that when they were about half grown was the time to start training them; so when they were five or six months old we put them in harness. He had said nothing, though, about the desirability of having an experienced dog with them to show them the ropes. So we just hitched them up and told them to mush. Cookie looked at us in amazement. This was a new game, and one she wasn't sure she liked. Kvak lay down on his back and went limp, his legs like boiled macaroni. Nothing we could do would get him onto his feet. Every time we stood him up he just collapsed. Metak and Richard just stood and shivered. Only Mukluk got the idea, and he very soon became bored with pulling not only the light sled we had, but all his relations as well. He finally sat down and looked disgusted, and I didn't blame him.

We might have given up the idea then if Stumpy hadn't made a fevered telephone call from Fitchburg, where he lives. Would we give one of his dogs a home? (He was a

bums, even if they did keep us in a continuous turmoil. Now we only have Kyak, the art dog, left. Kyak's stupidity doesn't extend to sticking his own neck out. He ran afoul of a porcupine just once, when he was very young. A great many dogs never learn to leave them alone, but will go through the agonizing experience of quills weekly until the day of their death. Not so Kyak. He'll look, but he's never touched one since that long ago disaster.

I have referred to the dogs and a dog team and I suppose I'd better clear up the matter once and for all. We thought at one time it would be a good idea to have a dog team. In this country the cars go out of use after the deep snows come, there being no possible way of keeping the road open, and that means that every pound of mail and food and material must either be carried on someone's back, or dragged on a hand sled, the two long, hilly miles from Middle Dam to here. And that's no fun. It's really mysterious how a reasonable load of groceries can multiply its weight so enormously in the time it takes to walk it two miles.

The second winter that we lived here, in the middle of February—a very well chosen time, since we were just about fed to the teeth with lugging things on our backs—Stumpy Crocker and Norman Vaughn came in to see us, and they came from below South Arm by dog team. Norman had been a dog driver on Admiral Byrd's first Antarctic Expedition, and he was full of enthusiasm for this particular mode of travel. His team consisted of nine dogs. I had always been led to suppose that huskies were vicious brutes, but these nine weren't. They were sweet. Of course, they periodically fought terribly among themselves, but as far as humans were concerned, they were a bunch of softies. Ralph and I fell in love with every last one of them. Our infatuation blinded us to the fact that for three days' stay, Norman brought in over a hundred pounds of food

just for the dogs, and we fell easy victims to the notion that a dog team was just what we needed and wanted most of anything in the world. This notion was clinched after Norman had ridden us up to Middle a couple of times. It was marvellous just to sit and be whisked up Wangan Hill. Besides, we didn't really need nine dogs, Norman assured us. Five would be plenty

So when, the next spring, Stumpy offered us a husky pup offspring of one of Norman's team, we accepted with alacrity. That was Cookie. From the same source the Millers acquired another husky, Karlok—he was an albino, and one of the most beautiful dogs I have ever seen—so what could be more natural than a match between them when they grew up? The final result was a litter of four pups, of which Kyak was one. And there was our dog team in embryo. Nothing could have been simpler.

The pups grew. Norman had told us that when they were about half grown was the time to start training them; so when they were five or six months old, we put them in harness. He had said nothing, though, about the desirability of having an experienced dog with them to show them the ropes. So we just hitched them up and told them to mush. Cookie looked at us in amazement. This was a new game, and one she wasn't sure she liked. Kyak lay down on his back and went limp, his legs like boiled macaroni. Nothing we could do would get him onto his feet. Every time we stood him up he just collapsed. Metak and Richard just stood and shivered. Only Mukluk got the idea, and he very soon became bored with pulling not only the light sled we had but all his relations as well. He finally sat down and looked disgusted, and I didn't blame him.

We might have given up the idea then if Stumpy hadn't made a fevered telephone call from Fitchburg, where he lives. Would we give one of his dogs a home? (He was a

victim of the dog team obsession at the time, too.) We wanted to know, naturally, what was the matter with the dog. People don't give valuable dogs away without any reason. It seemed that nothing was the matter with the dog except boyish high spirits. He was a wonderful dog—gentle, obedient, well-trained to harness. The only trouble was that he was a little too powerful. He'd run away with Stumpy's young son Weyman, and had frightened some saddle horses on a back road. Unfortunately the saddle horses were complete with riders, and, even more unfortunate, one of the riders was Stumpy's boss, who didn't appreciate the situation at all Hell was about to pop unless something was done about Thor. Now we had no saddle horses up our way, so— We'd really stopped listening at the "well-trained to harness" clause Here was the answer. Thor could be a sort of tutor to the other dogs. We said. "Yes." It seemed evident that Providence wanted us to have a dog team. No sooner did a problem arise than the solution appeared right behind it.

Thor arrived and we immediately renamed him the Hound of the Baskervilles. He was almost as big as a Shetland pony, and had a head like a basket ball. He didn't have teeth He had fangs. He looked horrible, and he was the biggest bowl of mush I ever saw. He thought he was a lap dog, and tried to sit on my lap whenever I sat down. I just haven't got enough lap for that, so he finally compromised by sitting beside me by the hour with that huge head on my knees, gazing adoringly into my face. My legs would grow numb under the weight, and consciousness of all my shortcomings would rise to the surface under that worshipful regard Nobody could be that wonderful, me least of all. It was very embarrassing for me I could have stood it, though, if Thor had been a good teacher. He wasn't. He was perfectly willing to work, and the others were willing to let him. Our dog team, obviously,

was going to consist of Thor and Mukluk Kyak, instead of being shamed by this example of usefulness, just grew limper and limper. It got so that whenever he saw one of us with a harness in hand, he fainted. The dog team, as *such*, was getting *no* place fast.

On top of this, it was costing more to feed the dogs than to feed us and we were continually deluged with complaints by a lot of damn fools about keeping dangerous animals—definitely untrue My Monday laundry was periodically ripped from the line and torn up, and the only way to insure keeping a whole pair of shoes in the house was to hang them by the laces from the ceiling beams where the dogs couldn't reach them. In short, we had nothing but trouble and expense in connection with those darn dogs We were told by experts that we'd never have a dog team unless we stopped making pets of the dogs It was all wrong to feed them twice a day and let them have the run of the house Dogs won't work unless they are half starved and kept tied up outside, away from human association Working dogs aren't pets, they are slaves and should be treated as such Well! That doesn't go for us Neither Ralph nor I could ever treat any dog like that—certainly not our own dear dogs that we loved. So we gave up the dog team idea But we still had the dogs.

Then one by one, things began to happen to them, and, viewed cosmically, it was probably just as well much as it hurt at the time After every disaster I said my little say—"Here we had six dogs, and five of them were swell. We're going to end by being left with the only lemon in the bunch, just you wait and see" And so we were Oh, well, Kyak isn't much of a dog, but he suits us He's nice with Rufus, and we love him dearly And that's all we want

Lots of things crop up to entertain us and our guests. There was the time for instance that we enlivened my sister Alice's visit with a fox hunt Don't be thinking of

red coats and Irish hunters, because it wasn't like that at all. We wore our night clothes and raincoats and rode in a Model T, our sole weapon was a landing net, and while Alice and I strove to establish the right note by shouting "View halloo" and "Yoicks" at intervals, Ralph rather ruined the effect with his insistence upon bellowing in moments of stress, "There goes the little son of a bitch!"

You see, he'd gone up to Middle Dam late to mail an important letter, and he'd got talking. By the time he arrived back home, Alice and I had gone to bed. He came busting into the house with the news that at the foot of Birch Hill he'd seen, gamboling in the glow of his headlights, a whole litter of fox pups, apparently strayed from their den while their mother was away, and quite evidently having a time for themselves. In fact, he'd had to stop the car to keep from running over them, and when he got out to look, they'd just sat down in the road and looked right back

"They're so tame," he concluded, "that I could have picked them right up, only I remembered in time that they bite like the devil."

This inspired Alice "Look, why couldn't we take a landing net and a big box to put them in—" She didn't have to finish. We got the idea. Before we quite realized what we were about, we were headed up the road, complete with net, box, and flashlight. Ralph was driving. Alice was standing on one running board with the light, and I was on the other with the net The plot was that as soon as a fox was sighted—or is "viewed" the right term? —the viewer would shout, the car would stop, and we'd all three pile off for the kill—or capture, in this case.

We saw the foxes all right. They were the cutest little articles that ever ran the woods—round and fluffy, with little pointed masked faces, up-standing ears, and wide grins. But they weren't to be caught. The moment we tried

to clap the net over one, he just eased off into the darkness where the beam from our flashlight, which wasn't very good anyhow, couldn't pick him up. We spent hours riding up and down the road, shouting and laughing and jumping on and off the car, until we were exhausted. I've always doubted the English theory that the fox enjoys the hunt as much as the hunters, but I do believe these foxes did. They knew perfectly well that they were in no jeopardy whatsoever, which isn't true of a fox with a pack of hounds after him. They kept coming back into the road for more. When we finally decided that if we didn't go home we'd all get pneumonia, they were still dodging back and forth in front of the car, daring us to try to catch them. But we knew when we were licked. We went home, built up a fire, and spent the rest of the night drinking coffee and Barbados rum. (Courtesy of Alice.)

Ralph and Gerrish are forever needing a third person to lend a hand in furtherance of one of their projects, and I'm invariably elected. A plank has to be held while they saw it, or the combined weight of the two of them is just too little to push a crippled car out of the driveway, and will I please come and lean on it, too? Or they want me to hold a rock drill for them. I don't know whether they don't trust each other, or whether they figure that if someone has to get hit on the head with a sledge hammer, I can best be spared. Whatever it is, I have sat for more hours than I care to count with a sledge whistling down past my nose as I concentrated on holding the top of the drill steady, while giving it a quarter turn between blows. I have got so I can tell by instinct just when to shout "Mud!"—when the water that has been poured into the hole has just exactly been taken up by the rock dust, and the whole works can be lifted out on the drill, leaving the hole dry and clean. Or they want me to be handy with a cant dog in case a motor they are shifting from one cradle

to another starts to tip; or to block up a rock as they raise it; or take down the figures while they scale a pile of pine logs; or read a spirit level while they do the leveling. If it isn't one thing, it's another.

And, after all, I'm supposed to be a writer, so I do have to spend a little time writing. Some of the work of writing can, of course, be done concurrently with other things. You can figure out, while washing the dishes, just how to get around the difficulty of having Her discourage His suit without having Her appear to the reader just silly, and also without forcing Her to reverse Her attitude, along toward the end of the story, so completely as to seem actually feeble-minded. You see, there are certain ill-defined but nonetheless definite rules that have to be followed in the writing of magazine stories. There are some things you simply can't do, and some subjects you simply can't touch upon. Within the frame-work of these rules, you have to try to produce the illusion of some originality. It's not as hard as it sounds, but it does require a little figuring, just as it requires a little figuring to get a grand piano up a stair case with two turns in it. I might add that these rules apply to poor, medium, and good stories. If you have a simply swell story in mind, you can forget the rules. A swell story takes care of itself.

VII



"Don't You Ever Get Bored?"

WE ARE OFTEN ASKED IF WE NEVER GET TERRIBLY BORED here and I'm *a little diffident about telling the truth*. There is something so smug about people who say, with

horror and umbrage at the very suggestion, "Oh, no! I'm never bored!" It sounds a little like, "Who, me? With my rich mine of inner resources? ME? With all my rare memories and rich philosophy?" I hate people like that. They're infuriating, and I think they are liars as well. Everyone is bored sometimes. It's a very painful illness, and completely undeserving of moral censure.

But be that as it may, the answer still is no. We're almost never bored. In winter we work too hard. In the summer we still work hard, and there are always distractions to fill in the chinks between jobs—things like guests, and fishing, and swimming. Nobody could be bored in autumn, when the air is like wine, and the hills are hazy tapestries with the red and gold thread of the frost-touched maple and birch embroidering a breath-taking design on the permanent dark fabric of the evergreens. The lakes then are unbelievably blue. All the things you've meant to do all summer but didn't get around to suddenly start crying to get done, and the days aren't long enough to crowd them all in before the first snow.

The only time left to be bored in is spring, when winter is over but it's still too early to plant the garden or move to the big house, and there's nothing very much to do but wait. Spring, as far as I'm concerned, is a vastly over-rated season, and I'd be bored to death with it, for all its burgeoning buds and returning birds and coy extremes of temperature, were it not for the spring log drive. The log drive was not designed solely for my entertainment, that's what is so remarkable and providential about its falling, as it does, in the slump of the year.

The idea of the drive is simple. All up the lakes, from Umbagog to the Little Kennebago, that tiny lost pond in the mountains fifty miles to the north, the winter's cut of four-foot pulp-wood lies boomed on the thick ice, waiting for the spring break-up. Before the first step of the

metamorphosis from so many sticks of wood to so many Sunday Supplements, or high explosives, or evening gowns can begin, it must be got to the mills in Berlin, N. H., on the Androscoggin. The obvious method is to float the wood down. So even before the ice is out, the driving crews start filtering into the woods, to the company wangans along the chain of lakes. There is a lot to be done before the wood can start south.

I should explain "wangan." It is an Indian word, and can mean almost anything, like the Latin *res*. It can mean a camp or building. Pond-in-the-River wangan—or Pondy wangan, as the drivers call it—is a long, low shack a third of a mile above us, where the Rapid River crew lives during the drive There is a sign in the bunk-house that reads, "Wangan open an hour after supper." That refers to the store where the cook sells candy, tobacco, snuff, and clothing. (It really is a big box in the kitchen, and the reason it isn't open all the time is that the cook doesn't want to be bothered in the middle of his baking to hand out and charge against wages a nickel's worth of makings.) The cook may say, "I lost my wangan when the work boat swamped," and that means that his dishes are at the bottom of the lake. Or he may complain, "The wangan's runnin' low," meaning this time that he's short of food. Or a man may take his wangan and fly—leave the job with his little bundle of personal belongings. You can tell only by the context what the word means, and it's a very convenient word to know I use it myself a lot, in non-driving connections.

The first year I was here, I couldn't wait for the drive to begin. I knew all about log drives, having subsisted at one time on a literary diet consisting exclusively of Stewart Edward White and Holman Day I knew all about the thrill and perils of white-water driving—the big jam, the narrow escapes, the cat-footed agility of the drivers on the

huge, plunging logs I knew just what a river driver would look like. He should be big and bold and dark, with plaid shirt, well-cut riding breeches, caulked boots, and a mouthful of picturesque curses and ribald songs.

There is a stir that goes through the woods just before the drive moves in that is difficult to explain. Actually it consists only of suddenly increased activity on the telephone. The telephone man, Fred Bennett, who has long, blowing white hair, the delicate and transparent fragility of great age, and the toughness and staying-powers of a cross between a Shetland pony and a camel, comes slogging in through the woods and swamps and wet snow between here and the Brown Farm, and adds a half-dozen phones to our line There is one at Middle Dam wangan, one at Pondy wangan, above us and one at Hedgehog wangan, below, at the mouth of the river The rest are hung in tar-paper cubicles on trees in places where crises demanding immediate aid may arise

Almost as soon as the phones are in they begin to ring, strange numbers that have nothing to do with our simple, year-round one, two three and four They ring all the time, and I neglecting my housework and throwing overboard all ethical scruples that first year, listened in (That's all right to do, here Often when I ask someone where they got a piece of news, they say quite frankly and shamelessly, "Oh, rubbering on the telephone") Just by standing in the kitchen with the receiver to my ear, I could see the drive get under way all up the length of the lakes.

At first all the calls were to Joe Mooney at the Brown Farm who acts as a sort of liaison officer. First of all came the reports as to the condition of the ice in the various lakes "She's pretty rotten here on Umbagog this morning. If a west wind comes up she'll be clear by night. The river's all open and we've got the steamer *Diamond* in."—"She's blackin' up fast toward the Narrows. Give her two

metamorphosis from so many sticks of wood to so many Sunday Supplements, or high explosives, or evening gowns can begin, it must be got to the mills in Berlin, N. H., on the Androscoggin. The obvious method is to float the wood down. So even before the ice is out, the driving crews start filtering into the woods, to the company wangans along the chain of lakes. There is a lot to be done before the wood can start south.

I should explain "wangan." It is an Indian word, and can mean almost anything, like the Latin *res*. It can mean a camp or building. Pond-in-the-River wangan—or Pondy wangan, as the drivers call it—is a long, low shack a third of a mile above us, where the Rapid River crew lives during the drive. There is a sign in the bunk-house that reads, "Wangan open an hour after supper." That refers to the store where the cook sells candy, tobacco, snuff, and clothing. (It really is a big box in the kitchen, and the reason it isn't open all the time is that the cook doesn't want to be bothered in the middle of his baking to hand out and charge against wages a nickel's worth of makings.) The cook may say, "I lost my wangan when the work boat swamped," and that means that his dishes are at the bottom of the lake. Or he may complain, "The wangan's runnin' low," meaning this time that he's short of food. Or a man may take his wangan and fly—leave the job with his little bundle of personal belongings. You can tell only by the context what the word means, and it's a very convenient word to know. I use it myself a lot, in non-driving connections.

The first year I was here, I couldn't wait for the drive to begin. I knew all about log drives, having subsisted at one time on a literary diet consisting exclusively of Stewart Edward White and Holman Day. I knew all about the thrill and perils of white-water driving—the big jam, the narrow escapes, the cat-footed agility of the

shrunk in the March sun, leaving her exposed and ugly again. We wanted to see her come to life.

Alligator is both the name of this winch boat in the Pond and the name of her type of amphibian boat. Alligators are built like barges, flat and rectangular, but they have a huge steel cable running from a winch in the bow. The anchor is dropped, the winch unwinds as the *Alligator* runs backward to the boom, and hooks on; then the winch winds up the *Alligator* to the anchor, trailing behind her the boomful of pulp-wood which it is her business to move from the Head of the Pond to Pondy dam, at the foot. When the cable is wound up the anchor is run ahead again and the process repeated At the foot of the Pond the boom is opened and the wood turned loose and sluiced into Rapid River, to be corralled three miles below in a catch boom, which the *Diamond* will winch to Errol Dam on the Androscoggin. Meanwhile the *Alligator* has gone back to the Head of the Pond for the boom that the *Rowell* has winched down the Richardsons from Upper Dam to Middle Dam and which has been sluiced down the upper section of Rapid River into the Pond. It sounds complicated, but it's just the old bucket brigade principle

In Canada where they hail from, an alligator doesn't stick necessarily to one lake, but goes right down the chain Between lakes they pull themselves across bare ground by fastening their cable ahead to a stump and winding the boat up to it with its own winch Many of the old pines along the Carry Road have deep girdling scars from the cable on their trunks, left from when they brought the *Alligator* in here.

As we were walking up the road to my first *Alligator* launching, we heard sounds of activity on the Pond-in-the-River Dam, so we swung off down the side trail that leads to it I'll admit I was in a dither. The men in my life to

or three days of hot sun and she'll be out of the Richardsons." (Why are things like ice that won't melt, or inclement weather, or balky motors always "she" to the men who deal with them?) "They brought a horse 'n' sled down the big lake this morning She won't go out for a week-ten days."

Then—"She's out of Pondy River, and we're puttin' in the *Alligator* tomorrow."—"The *Rowell's* in at Upper Dam."—"The *Frost's* just goin' off the ways at Cupsuptic."

Then it speeds up "This is Henry Mullen at Pondy. The cook claims he wants a barrel of flour, couple of crates of eggs, an' a half dozen hams We got about thirty to feed tonight"—"Middle Dam talkin'. I got to have some inch an' a quarter line and a bunch of pick poles."—"I need ten more men Thurston's boom's broke loose in the Arm, 'n' it's scattered all over Hell"—"I gotta have some pitch. This bateau at Middle leaks like a sieve."—"Where's that cookee? The cook's raving"—"I gotta close Pondy dam. I can't string no sluice-boom with all this water runnin'." And finally, "When's that first boom comin' down? We're ready any time."

The ice is out, the winch boats are in, the crews have come; the ground work is done. The drive is ready to start.

That first year, when the news came over the telephone that they were going to launch the *Alligator*, we thought we'd go up and watch We had seen her sitting patiently on her ways on the shore of the Pond all winter long, a big, twin-screw, square-ended craft, with a flat deck and a tall wheel-house perched on top. She was ugly and clumsy, but we felt a sympathy for her We had watched the red leaves of autumn sift down on her deck and lie in fading, flattening windrows. We had seen the snow drift higher and higher about her, the wind-sculptured curves lending her a false and fleeting beauty. We had seen it

They didn't even do the job with a dash. They just walked apathetically up and down the logs, boring holes, driving pegs and fastening ropes

Of course I should have remembered that people who do things well almost always do them without flourish. That's the trouble with expert performances; they look too easy to be exciting, unless you can do them a little yourself. I can't skate much, so to me Sonja Henie's stuff looks pretty simple to have so much fuss made about it. But I can shoot and swim and cast a fly fairly well so a champion in those fields has me standing on my chair. I'd never tried to walk a floating spruce log, so I would have been a little more impressed had there been some arm-waving and catching of balance. I've tried it since, and I know enough now to be plenty impressed, especially since I now know that very few river-hogs can swim.

(Blow No. 2 to my romantic notions —river drivers live in books; in life the term is river-hog. And I might as well deliver Blow No. 3 right now.—in a pulp drive there are no log jams, the wood is too short.)

To get back to the log-walking—I can imagine nothing worse than being out on the sluice-boom in the middle of the night, as is sometimes necessary, with the black water snarling three inches from my feet. The current goes by with express train speed when the gates are open, and the wood hurtles past in the dark. The boom, although two or three logs wide lashed together, is wet and slippery and anything but steady. Even if a man could swim, he would have little chance. No one would see him go, except by great luck. No one would hear him call, if he had time to call before being knocked senseless. The first time he would be missed would be when the men came back off the boom. And the water is like ice. It would be a cold and lonely way to die.

I also found later that the peculiarities of costume are

date had been distinguished more for their intelligence, good citizenship, and consideration for their mothers than for dashing and romantic attributes. The most athletic played good tennis. The most daring crossed streets between traffic lights and talked back to cops. I'd never known any men in the business of danger.

We came out of the woods onto the dam. A tall, sad, thin man with a long upper lip was drooping on the rail staring morosely across to where the sluice-booms were being strung—two long, floating log walkways from the dam up into the Pond, to guide the pulp-wood down to the open gate of the dam after the *Alligator* let it go. Presumably the stringers were river drivers, those daring heroes of song and legend. They looked like—

They looked like any gang of men going about a routine job, except they were a little shabbier, a little more nondescript, a little less arresting than any bunch of road menders I ever saw. There wasn't a plaid shirt in the crew. Some of them had on faded cotton shirts, but most of them were covered from the waist up with what my grandmother used to call "nice, sensible, woolen underwear," of the long-sleeved, knitted variety. Nothing is less glamorous, especially when south of them is worn a pair of ordinary, store-bought suit pants, which have seen better days, and which have been cut off, with a hack saw, apparently, just below the knee. (I later learned to say "stagged" below the knee. One stags one's pants, one's shirt sleeves, anything that needs to be abbreviated quickly, even one's hair.) The head-gear, too, was strange without managing to be piquant. First, tied like a baby's bonnet under the chin and tucked into the shirt at the back of the neck, was a bandanna handkerchief or, failing that, just an old piece of cloth, such as a shirt tail or a square of flour sacking. On top of that was the hat proper, which might be a cheap felt, a visored cap, or a battered derby.

They didn't even do the job with a dash. They just walked apathetically up and down the logs, boring holes, driving pegs and fastening ropes

Of course I should have remembered that people who do things well almost always do them without flourish. That's the trouble with expert performances, they look too easy to be exciting, unless you can do them a little yourself I can't skate much so to me Sonja Henie's stuff looks pretty simple to have so much fuss made about it. But I can shoot and swim and cast a fly fairly well, so a champion in those fields has me standing on my chair I'd never tried to walk a floating spruce log, so I would have been a little more impressed had there been some arm-waving and catching of balance I've tried it since, and I know enough now to be plenty impressed, especially since I now know that very few river-hogs can swim

(Blow No 2 to my romantic notions —river drivers live in books, in life the term is river-hog And I might as well deliver Blow No 3 right now —in a pulp drive there are no log jams, the wood is too short)

To get back to the log-walking—I can imagine nothing worse than being out on the sluice-boom in the middle of the night, as is sometimes necessary with the black water snarling three inches from my feet The current goes by with express train speed when the gates are open, and the wood hurtles past in the dark The boom, although two or three logs wide lashed together, is wet and slippery and anything but steady. Even if a man could swim, he would have little chance No one would see him go, except by great luck No one would hear him call, if he had time to call before being knocked senseless The first time he would be missed would be when the men came back off the boom And the water is like ice It would be a cold and lonely way to die

I also found later that the peculiarities of costume are

not merely a misguided attempt at quaintness. Riding breeches bind the knees, and long pants catch on brush and trip the wearer and get wet around the bottoms. The simple solution is long pants stagged. Black flies and gnats can make life Hell in springtime in the woods, and the best protection against them is to keep covered. Hence the woolen underwear and the bandannas. The hats are added, not as a sop to convention, but to keep the neck covering up and the glare out of the eyes

The sad man spat dourly into the water and looked at us, so Ralph said, "Nice day"

The man said, "Yeah," as though he were cursing it.

So Ralph said, "I'm Rich I live down below here."

"Yeah, I know," the man said "I'm Mullen." He didn't have to add that he was the Pondy boss. We knew that from our illicit listening on the telephone. I'd pictured him as being what they call here a "bull of the woods"—a big swaggering bravo who could lick his weight in wildcats. He didn't look to me as though he could lick Rufus, who was six months old at the time

Ralph rallied first. "Drop in sometime if you're cold or wet and have a drink. I've got some pretty good liquor."

Mullen shook his head and winced. "Not me. Thanking you all the same." He squinted at his crew out on the booms "I'm off the stuff," he stated violently, and spat again. "I was down to Berlin last week an' I bought me a quart. Then me an' another joker split another quart. Then a feller give me a pint It was all good stuff too," he explained defensively "Cost ninety cents a bottle Then I went into a lunch room an' got me a can of beer" His face twisted. "You know that God-damned Jees'ly beer pizened me," he concluded simply "So I'm just through with all that stuff."

We left him alone with his hangover and continued up to the *Alligator*.

There was a great deal of commotion there. Steam was up, and the winch cable was hitched to a dead-man across the cove. The *Alligator* was creaking and groaning and rumbling and not budging an inch. A head appeared through the afterhatch The sulphurous blue haze of profanity thinned a little when the owner saw me, out of respect to my sex It simmered down to a few heart-felt "Comical Christs," "God-damned blue-bottomed old tubs," "Desprit Jesuses," and "Christless onery bitches," which in the woods is practically parlor conversation. What he needed, it seemed was some grease for the ways.

"You ain't got no grease?" he asked Ralph hopefully. "If I had a little grease—"

This didn't seem to be my department, but it wouldn't hurt to ask "I've got some old doughnut fat, if that would do you any good—"

'How much you got?"

"A kettleful Ten pounds about"

He climbed down onto the ground "Lady, you saved my life I'll have the cook return it to you, soon's he gets his in."

So the *Alligator*, that first year we were here, slid down cinnamon-scented ways into the Pond and a few days later the cookee delivered at our door an equal quantity of lard and an invitation from the cook to come to lunch.

"Either first or second lunch Ten o'clock or two Don't matter" On the drive there are four meals a day, breakfast at six, first and second lunch, supper at five, and then, if the men have to sluice after dark, another lunch before they go to bed, which may be anywhere from ten P.M. until two the next morning

We decided we'd go to second lunch, because Rufus would be asleep and we could leave him Before we started up to the wangan, Ralph said "Now look There's a guy up there named Casey that has My Ideal of a hat. It's a

swell hat and I want to make a deal with him if I can for it. So I'll point him out to you, and if you could sort of be nice to him—you know, soften him up—"

I knew, and I knew too without asking, what the Ideal Hat of Casey would look like. It would be a battered felt, of no recognizable style, with the crown squashed out of shape and the brim drooping dejectedly. Ralph had been working on one of his old city hats for years, trying to achieve that *special* abandoned and disreputable look; but it takes a long time to get it. "All right," I said resignedly. "What is he, an Irishman?"

Every married woman knows the look he gave me—the very special look husbands save for their wives when they say something more than usually stupid; the look combining in equal proportions disgust, resignation and nausea, with a dash of dismay at the prospect of living to be a grandfather with such a half-wit.

"With a name like Casey?" he asked. "What do you suppose he is, a Frenchman?"

The meals on the drive are buffet affairs, unlike the sitting-down meals in a logging camp. All the food is laid out on a long trestle table in the kitchen, with the knives and forks and tin plates and pannikins stacked at the end. You get your tools first, and then go down the table, filling up your plate with whatever looks good to you. The trouble is everything looks good. There are always two kinds of meat—a hot beef pot-roast, for example, and cold sliced ham—and potatoes and three other vegetables. Then there are always baked beans, and fresh bread, and pickles, and applesauce, and, to top off with, three kinds of pie, cake, cookies, and doughnuts. When you can't get any more onto your plate, you look for a place to sit down and eat it. The cook wanted us, as company, to sit at the table, but I saw a hat that could belong to no one but Casey. So I said I'd rather do as the river-hogs did, if he

didn't mind, and went outdoors and sat down beside the man with the hat, under a pine tree.

He looked a little terrified, but he couldn't get away, as there was a man on the other side of him.

"Lovely day," I said cordially, and he grunted. "Good cook you've got," I went on, and he showed the whites of his eyes like a nervous horse "Been working in the woods long?" I asked with neighborly interest, and he definitely shied

The man on the other side took pity on us both. "He don't understand no English, lady," he explained kindly. "He's a Frenchman"

I gaped at him. This was absolutely too marvellous to be true After that look Ralph had given me— "With a name like Casey?" I asked

"Oh, they just call him Casey He's got some frog name nobody can pronounce. So when he went to work for the company, they put him down as Casey Sounds as near like his real name as they could get"

I beamed on Casey, not minding that he didn't beam back He was unshaven, and ragged and dirty, but he looked wonderful to me He'd given me a weapon I could use in domestic crises for years to come I loved him like a brother

Apparently he misunderstood my intentions, because he got up in a panic and fled Incidentally, Ralph never did make the hat deal because next day Casey asked to be transferred to the Middle Dam wangan I don't know whether it was I who scared him, or whether it was the predatory way Ralph kept looking at his hat

The remaining driver said to me comfortingly, "Don't mind him, lady He's bashful All us fellers is bashful Lots of folks think we're tough, but we ain't Any time you want to come up here or to the dam, you come right ahead Nobody'll hurt you An' any time you want some

chores done down to your place, like splittin' wood, say, you just call me. Just call the cook on the phone and say you want to get hold of Venus."

Would I not! Not every woman has a chance to confound her husband by saying, "Oh, don't bother, if you're busy. I'll get Venus to do it."

We thanked the cook kindly for his hospitality, and said we had to get home, because the baby would be waking up.

"You got a baby?" His eyes lighted. "Bring him up here. There's nothing I like so much as a baby. Any time you want to go any place, you leave the baby here with me an' the cookee."

He meant it too, and I took him up on it a dozen times. I'd come back from an afternoon off, to find Rufus propped up on the cook's bunk, chewing a piece of dried apple, with a circle of men around him, trying to make him laugh. They were wonderful with him—much better than I was. Most of them were homeless and familyless, and a baby was a treat. As a matter of fact the first picture ever taken of Rufus was taken in front of the wangan in the arms of Jonesy, the drive cook.

That cook, Jonesy, and his cookee, Frank, were the first of a long line of woods cooks that I now know, and I hold them in especial esteem. Jonesy and I used to hold long conclaves on the culinary art, and he taught me how to make a tough pot-roast tender by smothering it with raw onions and adding a cup of canned tomatoes, salt, pepper, and a little water. Then you cover it tightly and leave in a slow oven for hours. The acid in the tomatoes, so Jonesy claimed, eats the tough fibre in the meat. Anyhow, it works. Another valuable thing he taught me was how to cut fresh bread into thin slices—a neat trick if you can do it, as everyone who has hacked jagged chunks off a warm loaf can testify. The knife must be reasonably sharp, of course, but the trick is to have it hot. Lay it on top of the

stove for a minute, every four or five slices This also works

In return I bootlegged vanilla extract for him Extracts aren't allowed in woods camps, and "you know yourself, Mis' Rich—you're a cook—you know a cake tastes like sawdust without no extract."

I thought this was a senseless regulation, and said so.

Jonesy sighed "They have to have it that way. Fellers'll drink it up as fast as they can tote it in, an' there's nothing meaner'n a vanilla drunk, 'less it's a canned heat drunk."

"But imitation vanilla has no alcohol. That I just gave—"

"Sure But lots of the woodsmen can't read. It smells like vanilla and tastes like vanilla, so they drink it and get drunk anyhow"

I was glad to hear this, as it confirmed an opinion of mine that getting drunk is fifty percent wishful thinking.

As a cookee, Frank wasn't too good, but he was entertaining in an unintentional way He spent most of the time when he should have been peeling potatoes and washing dishes—a cookee's lot in life—strumming on a guitar and singing cowboy songs. His ambition was to get onto the Radio, on a hill-billy program I've heard worse than he, though that isn't saying much So he'd drone "When the Work's All Done This Fall" happily through his nose while Jonesy and Ralph and I peeled his potatoes

We were all thus engaged one day when he discovered that by calling the Brown Farm and asking Joe to switch him onto a Magalloway line he could talk to the Camerons. The Camerons have some very pretty daughters, one of whom Frank had met at a dance He put his guitar away under the bunk and began to bustle around

"You got a flat-iron, Mrs. Rich?" he asked "Can I borrow it? I got to press my pants."

I said, "Yes," and Ralph said, "Aren't you a little ambitious, young-feller? It's fourteen miles from here to Camerons', and most of it's uphill. You can't walk that distance and back after supper."

Frank was surprised. "Oh, I wasn't planning on it. I'm just going to call her up. An' I ain't going to talk to no girl on the telephone with my pants looking like I'd slept in 'em."

That remains to this day the yard-stick by which I measure all chivalry.

Frank's, I'm sure, was the only singing I ever heard in a driving camp, in spite of the fictional convention that rivermen and loggers top off a hard, twelve or more hour day by sitting around a camp-fire singing French-Canadian chansons and talking about Paul Bunyan. Our riverhogs come in from work, eat their suppers, and go to bed On the days that there is no boom to sluice or other work to be done, they wash their clothes and mend them, and play stud poker, and sleep A few that have licenses go fishing and some pitch horse-shoes in the wangan yard, and a very few, since so many are illiterate, read old magazines that we give the cook But none sing

The only stories that are told are woods gossip. Nobody ever heard of Paul Bunyan The nearest thing to him is Sock Saunders, who is more of a poltergeist than a hero. If a man drops a picaroon into the river he says, "Well, take it, Sock Saunders!" If he slips on a log. but catches himself in time, he says, "Foxed you that time, Sock Saunders." If he cuts his foot, he explains, "Sock Saunders got me." There are no stories about Sock Saunders He's just the guy who hangs around and makes life complicated.

But nobody sings as they walk the boom in at Middle Dam, an event that should call for a chanty, with the

boss lining out the verse and the walkers roaring the chorus At Middle the *Rowell* can't get in close enough to the dam for the current to take the boom in, so on either side of the inlet above the dam is a headworks—a big log raft with a capstan on it. Hawsers are hitched to the boom, and four or more men man the capstan and walk the boom in. It comes reluctantly, inch by inch, as they walk doggedly round and round It's hard, monotonous, drugging work But nobody sings

Around the camp the cook is the boss, no matter who the boss of the rest of the job is What he says, goes. One year we had a cook named Scotty Maxwell, a veteran of the Boer War, who was at the relief of Ladysmith. How he landed in the Maine woods I don't know, but he is a good cook and he brought British Army discipline right along with him He's a holy terror in the kitchen He always has a meat cleaver handy but he never has to do more than glance at it He liked sit-down meals, where he could get people lined up in orderly rows instead of having them sprawled every which way, all over the yard. But nobody could sit down if his face and hands and fingernails couldn't pass Scotty's inspection Whoever fell below his impossibly high standards went back and washed, ten times, if necessary I went into the kitchen one day at first lunch and found five terrified Frenchmen sitting in a row on the floor with their plates between their knees. They'd worn their hats to the table, and were being taught gentlemanly conduct the hard way

The third functionary around the drive is the bull-cook. This title puzzled me, as I never saw the bull-cook, a wizened little man answering to Bones, cooking Jonesy cleared the matter up. "He's called the bull-cook, but he's really the barroom man"

"Barroom? But if you can't even have vanilla—"

"Oh, not that kind of a barroom. It's where the men sleep."

"Bunk-house?"

"Well, city folks might call it that." City folks also call a place to eat a mess-hall. In the woods it's the kitchen.

The barroom man is a combined chore-boy and chambermaid, and his job is no sinecure. He has to keep the barroom clean, keep a fire going in cold weather and a smudge going on nights when the bugs are bad He also has to keep an outside fire going under an oil drum of water, so the men can bathe and launder. The cook won't have people using his hot water. Then he has to saw wood for his own and sometimes the cook's fires and row the lunches out to the *Alligator* crew when meal-time overtakes them in the middle of a haul

This last was Bones' cross, because he couldn't row a boat. We used to make book on how long it would take him to get near enough to the *Alligator* to catch a line thrown him by the crew But his sea-faring career ended one day when the wind came up while he was waiting on the *Alligator* for the crew to finish eating, so he could *bring back the dishes* He was afraid to come ashore in the rowboat and spent the rest of the day on the Pond. The barroom fires went out and the boss was raging as was the cook. The *Alligator* crew missed two meals as he sat there and were not pleased After that Frank rowed the meals out, and Bones helped with the potato peeling.

As May wore on toward June, we became used to waking up in the morning to the hollow *thunk* of the wood as it bumped down the rapids in front of the house. It is a pleasant sound, like distant, slow-beaten drums. We learned to watch the dam from our porch, and to grab our fly-rods and run when a boom came in In the short interval between the arrival of a boom and the opening of the gates to sluice it, there is often a quarter hour's glare

sheltering the gate-works. The gates are raised by man power, teams of several men each manning the big wheels at the ends of the heavy timber gates. They start turning the wheels over slowly, and the gates creak as they move against the enormous pressure against them. Then, as the tempo increases, the gates come up slowly, dark and dripping, groaning and protesting, and the water begins to flow under them, impatient to be free. The first white spate deepens and greens, and the low whispering rustle changes to a roar The whole dam vibrates as the gates clear the water, and the boss shouts, "Let go your trip!" The men who have been on the gates come out on the dam, their chests heaving, their faces glistening with sweat, and watch the first wood go through. "She's runnin' good," they will say, and "Ain't that handsome pulp, though? Comes from up back of Metalluc. I was cuttin' on the stump up there last winter"

It's lovely on the dam on a bright spring morning, with the wind blowing down across the boom and filling the air with the sharp smell of resin, so strong and fresh that you can taste it The planks tremble under your feet, and the roar of the river and the thumping of the wood fills the ears. The river is deep blue and crisping white, and the cut ends of the pulp are like raw gold in the sun All the senses come alive, even that strange rare sense that tells you, half a dozen times between birth and death—if you are lucky—that right now, right in this spot, you have fallen into the pattern of the universe

We would like to spit on the last log of the last boom of the drive as it goes through the dam, but we're not sure that this brings luck to any but those who have worked on the drive. So we give the good spitting spots to the river-hogs, who put a lot of store by the ceremony They spit copiously and accurately, and I hope the charm works I thought I'd discovered a new folk-way when I saw a

front, or rinsing their clothes in the brook where it flows
der the Carry Road. The windows are shuttered once-
ore, and the benches have been taken inside. By the
ook a forgotten pair of socks droops from an alder bush
here they were hung up to dry. The trampled grass in
e yard is beginning to spring upright again. Down by
e Pond, the *Alligator* is high and dry again on her ways.

The drive is over. It wasn't what I had expected it to
e. The men weren't romantic, or daring, or glamorous.
ut they were something much better. They were good
eighbors. We're going to miss them

But not for a week or so Not until Fred Bennett comes
n again and takes the phones out. While they stay we'll
e too busy to miss anyone The fishermen have begun to
warm into the woods "Sports" the natives call them here;
it is a term like the cowboy's "dudes" or the stage farmer's
"city slickers" Fishing up and down the river, deep, so
they think, in the wilds of Maine, they are amazed and
baffled to find telephones hanging on trees.

I know just what they say. They say, "Well, for crying
out loud! Look at the telephone! Gee, let's ring it and see
if anyone answers"

So they ring it Naturally they ring one, which is our
number, and by the time Fred Bennett gets in we are half
insane with trying to explain in a million well-chosen
words the whys and wherefores of the situation.

But now, I think we have at last evolved a system. We've
got now so we can tell a "sport's" ring from a native's It
has a feeble, wavering quality, quite unlike that of the
firm hand accustomed to cranking a battery phone So
when that kind of a ring comes over the line, we take down
the receiver, say briskly, "Grand Central Station, Infor-
mation Booth," and hang up It almost always stops them.

To be fair to the writers of the romantic school of log-
ging fiction, what they invariably dealt with is the long-

in front, or rinsing their clothes in the brook where it flows under the Carry Road. The windows are shuttered once more, and the benches have been taken inside. By the brook a forgotten pair of socks droops from an alder bush where they were hung up to dry. The trampled grass in the yard is beginning to spring upright again. Down by the Pond, the *Alligator* is high and dry again on her ways.

The drive is over. It wasn't what I had expected it to be. The men weren't romantic, or daring, or glamorous. But they were something much better. They were good neighbors. We're going to miss them.

But not for a week or so. Not until Fred Bennett comes in again and takes the phones out. While they stay we'll be too busy to miss anyone. The fishermen have begun to swarm into the woods. "Sports" the natives call them here; it is a term like the cowboy's "dudes" or the stage farmer's "city slickers." Fishing up and down the river, deep, so they think, in the wilds of Maine, they are amazed and baffled to find telephones hanging on trees.

I know just what they say. They say, "Well, for crying out loud! Look at the telephone! Gee, let's ring it and see if anyone answers."

So they ring it. Naturally they ring one, which is our number, and by the time Fred Bennett gets in we are half insane with trying to explain in a million well-chosen words the whys and wherefores of the situation.

But now, I think we have at last evolved a system. We've got now so we can tell a "sport's" ring from a native's. It has a feeble, wavering quality, quite unlike that of the firm hand accustomed to cranking a battery phone. So when that kind of a ring comes over the line, we take down the receiver, say briskly, "Grand Central Station, Information Booth," and hang up. It almost always stops them.

To be fair to the writers of the romantic school of logging fiction, what they invariably dealt with is the long-

in front, or rinsing their clothes in the brook where it flows under the Carry Road. The windows are shuttered once more, and the benches have been taken inside. By the brook a forgotten pair of socks droops from an alder bush where they were hung up to dry. The trampled grass in the yard is beginning to spring upright again. Down by the Pond, the *Alligator* is high and dry again on her ways.

The drive is over. It wasn't what I had expected it to be. The men weren't romantic, or daring, or glamorous. But they were something much better. They were good neighbors We're going to miss them

But not for a week or so Not until Fred Bennett comes in again and takes the phones out. While they stay we'll be too busy to miss anyone The fishermen have begun to swarm into the woods "Sports" the natives call them here; it is a term like the cowboy's "dudes" or the stage farmer's "city slickers" Fishing up and down the river, deep, so they think, in the wilds of Maine, they are amazed and baffled to find telephones hanging on trees

I know just what they say. They say, "Well, for crying out loud! Look at the telephone! Gee, let's ring it and see if anyone answers"

So they ring it Naturally they ring one, which is our number, and by the time Fred Bennett gets in we are half insane with trying to explain in a million well-chosen words the whys and wherefores of the situation.

But now, I think we have at last evolved a system. We've got now so we can tell a "sport's" ring from a native's. It has a feeble, wavering quality. quite unlike that of the firm hand accustomed to cranking a battery phone. So when that kind of a ring comes over the line, we take down the receiver, say briskly, "Grand Central Station, Information Booth," and hang up It almost always stops them.

To be fair to the writers of the romantic school of logging fiction, what they invariably dealt with is the long-

what a blowdown will do when you get a saw almost through it. It may drop as you plan it's going to. On the other hand the stresses may be such that it will jump with the force of a forty-mule-kick and knock you galley-west. You never can tell, and maybe you won't get a chance to make a second guess.

The nearest Government storage booms were below us in Umbagog, and Jim Barnett contracted to get out the pine lying on the slopes along Rapid River and into the booms before winter set in. He moved his men and wangan into the Pond-in-the-River driving camp in early summer, and by the first of October he was ready to drive the logs, which he had temporarily boomed up in the Pond, down the river to the Government booms. I, personally, was looking forward to this drive with a great deal of interest, because I had long since given up hope of ever seeing a long-log drive I wasn't glad the trees had blown down, you understand, but since they had, I was glad to be on the spot to see them driven.

And then the Government had another idea We should have been warned when we read in a two-week-old Boston Sunday paper a feature article on the Romance of Hurricane Timber—that was what they were calling our blowdown Outside—and the Revival of the Old Long-Log Days We should have been warned, but we were only entertained We had no inkling of what was in store for us until Jim came in from Outside one day and began telling about meeting the Timber Salvage agent, who, it seemed, had discovered a publicity angle to the pine drive. This long-log drive on Rapid River would probably be the very last of the old-time drives ever to be held, and he thought it should be perpetuated for posterity. He was going to bring in a bunch of newspaper reporters and newsreel cameramen to make a living record of this rapidly dying bit of the American scene—his verbiage, not Jim's or mine

choice. He was presumably available through the simple expedient of paying off his fine; and he had plenty of legends clustered around his name. He was said to have crossed the Androscoggin on floating logs, once when young and drunk, just to give one example. So Roy Bragg, who was bossing the drive and had a drag at the jail, went over to get him

He came back with Black John all right, but announced that they'd have to return him in good condition as soon as the emergency was over. Black John had been arrested during the preceding month and it was now the last of September and the court records were closed and couldn't be opened again. They were terribly sorry, over at the jail, and they wanted to oblige; but they didn't make the laws. However, if Roy wanted to *borrow* Black for a couple of days, they'd be glad to lend him, if Roy would be sure to return him in good order Roy was sure Why wouldn't he be? There would be no liquor and he had plenty of strong-arm boys to keep their eyes on Black.

Early the next day the work boat brought in the cameramen and reporters None of the woodsmen had ever been exposed to the gentlemen of the press before, and they were fascinated So was I. They were exactly what I hoped they'd be, from reading and movie-going They got everybody in a dither by running around poking their noses into everything and asking questions The woodsmen were all ready to go out and start driving the logs, and I think they were a little baffled when it developed that *first they* were to take off their coats and sit around the camp and barroom occupying themselves with their usual Sunday diversions—stud poker, clothes mending, saw filing, reading, and sleeping—while they had their pictures taken.

Then the newsmen got a look at Black John, the star of the show He wasn't much to look at I'll admit—just a wizened up little old man with a grizzly stubble of beard, a

just standing there motionless except for his dancing feet. But when his log crashed onto a reef and half its length reared out of water, Black John was in the air a split second before the crash, and as the two wings of water flung out by the settling log collapsed, he was ten feet away on another log, still poker faced, still keeping his feet moving He was good, all right

After the cameramen had taken what they considered enough feet of that, they announced to Jim that now they wanted a log jam. So the boss went downriver to find one. With the amount of water running, that should be easy, but just to play it safe, Jim told him to take a crew, and if they couldn't find one ready-made, to make one. In the meantime he suggested that maybe the newsmen would like to see Black John go through the sluice of the dam on a log Black John balked, however He'd go for ten dollars, but he wouldn't go for nothing In the first place this was supposed to be a vacation from jail, and he wasn't going to exert himself too much. He could work back at the clink. In the second place, if he fell into the river, as he was likely to do, it would cost him money. He'd have to reimburse the owners of his borrowed finery, and he'd have to buy himself a bottle of pneumonia preventative. However, he did finally compromise to the extent of agreeing to go down the sluice in a bateau if Jim would get him a crew By the time the crew was found and had been taken out of their overalls and put into something more suitable, and the sluice had been successfully negotiated the boss was back with the news that he hadn't been able to find a jam, but he'd managed to start a honey on the rips just above Long Pool So we all adjourned the half mile down the river

It was a pretty good jam. The logs were coming around the bend and hurling themselves onto the key log that the men had managed to lodge across the current, hitting with

mand the man! Grab his cant dog! That cost the company money!" That was the old river-hogs' battle cry. It put the finishing touch on the episode. Black John had a true feeling for style.

That about ended the famous long-log drive—except, of course, for the actual driving of the logs down to Umbagog. Its like will never be seen again. As a matter of fact, I doubt if its like was ever seen before in the annals of lumbering; it was unique. But everybody was satisfied. The newshawks—to quote *Time*—got their stories, the cameramen got their pictures, the salvage agent got his publicity; the woodsmen got their faces in the "moom-pitchers"; and the rest of us got a field day I'm not sure what Jim Barnett got, except a lot of trouble and expense If it's any comfort to him, we Riches think he managed the whole affair with graciousness and tact.

P.S. Black John was returned safely and in good condition

VIII



"Aren't You Ever Frightened?"

There's nothing to be afraid of in the woods—except yourself. Nothing is going to hurt you—except yourself This like all sweeping statements, is subject to a few amendments, but the basic idea still holds There is nothing at all to be afraid of in the woods—excepting always yourself

When I investigate what lies back of the statement, "I'd be simply terrified most of the time, living the way you do," I usually find bears. For some reason the non-woodswise expect to be eaten by a bear the minute they get out

carry on my own harmless business. I can feel that constant mute and questioning regard from hillside and thicket and roadside tangle of grasses and weeds; deer and bear and coon, and fox, mink and partridge and little white-footed, bat-eared mouse—they all stand and watch.

My favorite animals to watch are the deer and foxes. They are both so quick and pretty and well co-ordinated, and they're both such a lovely red color in the summer. We don't see foxes very often. They do their sleeping by day and their prowling by night. Once I saw one, though, eating blueberries off a bush. Usually we see them trotting their precise and dainty trot along the road. This one looked so informal, with his feet braced and his head outthrust, pulling the clusters of ripe berries off the bushes, and ducking as the branch snapped back.

We see deer all the time, but we never get tired of them—or almost never. The exception was a deer we named Joe. He started coming into the yard when he was just a young spike-horn, and we took such pains not to frighten him that he soon became very tame. He'd stand around and watch us work. Deer are very curious, and it almost got to the point where before Ralph could drive a nail into a board, he had to shove Joe's nose out of the way. That was all right, what finally fed us up with Joe was his destructive attitude toward our flower gardens.

We'd worked hard on those gardens. One was an old ant hill, which we'd chosen as the site for a bed because it had good exposure and didn't need clearing. All it needed was to have the ants exterminated. Before we got through with that little chore, we wished we'd never been born. Two or three of the beds just had to have the underbrush and roots and rocks cleared away—and, of course, the soil changed over from acid woods mold to good garden earth. But the last of them we made on the vestigial remains of an ancient bridge pier. No one has ever been able to ac-

carry on my own harmless business. I can feel that constant mute and questioning regard from hillside and thicket and roadside tangle of grasses and weeds; deer and bear and coon, and fox, mink and partridge and little white-footed, bat-eared mouse—they all stand and watch.

My favorite animals to watch are the deer and foxes. They are both so quick and pretty and well co-ordinated, and they're both such a lovely red color in the summer. We don't see foxes very often. They do their sleeping by day and their prowling by night. Once I saw one, though, eating blueberries off a bush. Usually we see them trotting their precise and dainty trot along the road. This one looked so informal, with his feet braced and his head outthrust, pulling the clusters of ripe berries off the bushes, and ducking as the branch snapped back.

We see deer all the time, but we never get tired of them—or almost never. The exception was a deer we named Joe. He started coming into the yard when he was just a young spike-horn, and we took such pains not to frighten him that he soon became very tame. He'd stand around and watch us work. Deer are very curious, and it almost got to the point where before Ralph could drive a nail into a board, he had to shove Joe's nose out of the way. That was all right, what finally fed us up with Joe was his destructive attitude toward our flower gardens.

We'd worked hard on those gardens. One was an old ant hill, which we'd chosen as the site for a bed because it had good exposure and didn't need clearing. All it needed was to have the ants exterminated. Before we got through with that little chore, we wished we'd never been born. Two or three of the beds just had to have the underbrush and roots and rocks cleared away—and, of course, the soil changed over from acid woods mold to good garden earth. But the last of them we made on the vestigial remains of an ancient bridge pier. No one has ever been able to ac-

carry on my own harmless business. I can feel that constant mute and questioning regard from hillside and thicket and roadside tangle of grasses and weeds; deer and bear and coon, and fox, mink and partridge and little white-footed, bat-eared mouse—they all stand and watch.

My favorite animals to watch are the deer and foxes. They are both so quick and pretty and well co-ordinated, and they're both such a lovely red color in the summer. We don't see foxes very often. They do their sleeping by day, and their prowling by night. Once I saw one, though, eating blueberries off a bush. Usually we see them trotting their precise and dainty trot along the road. This one looked so informal, with his feet braced and his head outthrust, pulling the clusters of ripe berries off the bushes, and ducking as the branch snapped back.

We see deer all the time, but we never get tired of them—or almost never. The exception was a deer we named Joe. He started coming into the yard when he was just a young spike-horn, and we took such pains not to frighten him that he soon became very tame. He'd stand around and watch us work. Deer are very curious, and it almost got to the point where before Ralph could drive a nail into a board, he had to shove Joe's nose out of the way. That was all right; what finally fed us up with Joe was his destructive attitude toward our flower gardens.

We'd worked hard on those gardens. One was an old ant hill, which we'd chosen as the site for a bed because it had good exposure and didn't need clearing. All it needed was to have the ants exterminated. Before we got through with that little chore, we wished we'd never been born. Two or three of the beds just had to have the underbrush and roots and rocks cleared away—and, of course, the soil changed over from acid woods mold to good garden earth. But the last of them we made on the vestigial remains of an ancient bridge pier. No one has ever been able to ac-

carry on my own harmless business. I can feel that constant mute and questioning regard from hillside and thicket and roadside tangle of grasses and weeds; deer and bear and coon, and fox, mink and partridge and little white-footed, bat-eared mouse—they all stand and watch.

My favorite animals to watch are the deer and foxes. They are both so quick and pretty and well co-ordinated, and they're both such a lovely red color in the summer. We don't see foxes very often. They do their sleeping by day and their prowling by night. Once I saw one, though, eating blueberries off a bush. Usually we see them trotting their precise and dainty trot along the road. This one looked so informal, with his feet braced and his head outthrust, pulling the clusters of ripe berries off the bushes, and ducking as the branch snapped back.

We see deer all the time, but we never get tired of them—or almost never. The exception was a deer we named Joe. He started coming into the yard when he was just a young spike-horn, and we took such pains not to frighten him that he soon became very tame. He'd stand around and watch us work. Deer are very curious, and it almost got to the point where before Ralph could drive a nail into a board, he had to shove Joe's nose out of the way. That was all right, what finally fed us up with Joe was his destructive attitude toward our flower gardens.

We'd worked hard on those gardens. One was an old ant hill, which we'd chosen as the site for a bed because it had good exposure and didn't need clearing. All it needed was to have the ants exterminated. Before we got through with that little chore, we wished we'd never been born. Two or three of the beds just had to have the underbrush and roots and rocks cleared away—and, of course, the soil changed over from acid woods mold to good garden earth. But the last of them we made on the vestigial remains of an ancient bridge pier. No one has ever been able to ac-

n't miss seeing other people. We don't miss them at all. It may sound a little piggish and whimsical to say that what we do sometimes get lonesome for are civilized flowers, and stretches of lawn and ordered gardens. Our tangles of zinnias and larkspur and violas, slopping over into rather shaggy grass paths, may be a pretty far cry from well walks and clipped hedges and roses around a sundial, but we love them and I can have tame flowers to put on my dinner table and around the living-room part of the year

I hope the foregoing explains why we got bored with Joe. Unfortunately, he didn't get bored with us. He'd go back onto the ridges every fall, and we'd hope for the best. But every spring he'd show up again, bigger and lustier than ever It didn't make us much happier to learn that a full grown buck makes a dangerous pet After he has reached maturity, he may, without a moment's warning, turn definitely nasty, lashing out with horns and hoofs for no reason at all The Durkees in Upton had a tame buck that, after living off their bounty for several years, suddenly chased someone into the lake—it was fall, too, and the water was cold—and wouldn't let him out until someone put a bullet through his head We didn't want that to happen to us The situation was solved when we developed that dog team idea The smell and sound of a pack of huskies was enough to scare Joe into the next county So some good did come out of that impractical dog-dream after all

Probably the cutest, sweetest animals in the woods are newborn fawns They aren't red like their mothers, but spotted tan and white, so that when they stand still—as they do, instinctively, in the presence of danger—they look like just another patch of sun-dappled shadow. There is nothing quite so defenseless as a new little fawn, so Nature takes over its protection until it can at least outrun the

uming and skidded to a halt just as the doe, who stuck until the radiator was almost touching her, jumped clear. She had courage, poor thing. The fawn couldn't jump. It was too little and weak and confused. It went down in the road. Ralph swarmed over the door, heart-broken. He's often hardboiled in his attitude toward his own kind, but when it comes to animals, he's just a bowl of custard. Then he saw that he'd stopped well short of the fawn. It hadn't been touched. It had simply obeyed a command from something that had been born within it—a command to play possum. It lay flat on its belly with its hind legs under its body in a crouch and its front legs stretched straight out, its head between them. The grass between the ruts arched over it, and it lay perfectly supine, even when Ralph bent over it. Only its eyes moved, rolling back to follow his movements. Even when he ran his hand along its spine, to make sure it was all right, the only sign of life it gave was an uncontrollable shrugging of the loose skin on its back. It didn't know what this was all about, after all, it had had only since about dawn to get used to this world; it had nothing to go by except that inner voice; but it was doing its poor little best to follow instructions.

It was obvious that it would go on lying there until snow flew unless something was done, and Ralph had to get home to dinner. So he picked it up in his arms and started to carry it to the side of the road. Then it came to life. Legs flew in all directions. It was like trying to cuddle an indignant centipede, Ralph informed me later. He put it down off the road in a hollow by a large rock, and leaped into the Ford.

The first thing I knew about the affair was when I heard the car come into the yard and Ralph's voice shouting for me to come quick and ask no questions. Fortunately, I have long been accustomed to following orders first and finding out afterwards, so I set the pudding I was making

would be toward the blankety blank so-and-so that would leave a pail there, and I thought it would be fun to have him kick it viciously aside, only to unveil a furious porcupine. It didn't work. The porcupine escaped by a sapping operation, and Ralph didn't get home until after dark, and never saw the pail. We did have an albino porcupine that lived for a while out back of Gerrish's house, and that, being rather rare, was interesting enough. But porcupines as a tribe are very, very dull We had a weasel living in the chimney base once, too, but we never could get very matey with him, either He was too quick for us. We'd see him, brown in summer and white in winter, flowing like quicksilver in and out of the rocks and bristling his whiskers at us He always gave me the shivers. He was so deadly purposeful and he had such a vicious eye. I was glad when he moved away

We've never seen a wildcat, though there are plenty of them around We see their tracks often enough, and sometimes hear them yowling on the ridges They aren't dangerous, unless cornered, but they like to make you think they are One of their tricks is to follow you along the road, just about dusk They don't stay out in the open, where you can turn around and heave a rock at them. They keep in the bushes at the side When you stop, they stop When you hurry, they hurry. After a while it gets on your nerves

Once in the late fall I was sitting in the living-room of an evening with Ralph and our friend Rush Rogers, knitting It was a very peaceful scene For once the room was reasonably tidy, and for once the dogs—we had two then, Kyak and Mukluk—were sensible of their responsibilities, and were lying in picturesque postures in front of the fire, instead of trying to crowd us out of our best chairs The firelight glanced off the backs of the books on their shelves in a satisfactory colorful manner, and a little light snow

We see bears only once in a while, although there are plenty of them around here. They are shy animals, not easily caught unaware. We usually come on them in various berry patches, when their attention is concentrated on picking berries and they are off guard. These encounters are carried off with a minimum of excitement. We say, "Oh," and start south, and the bear says, "Oh," and starts north. Not that anybody is afraid of anybody, you understand. We just don't like to intrude on each other's privacy.

We don't believe in confining wild animals. Nothing makes me madder than to see a lion in a cage or some luckless raccoon chained up at a gas station. I'm not a reformer by nature, but that's one thing I will crusade about. I think it's all right to kill animals if you have to, or even if you want to, but it's not all right to imprison them. I always feel like declaring a holiday, and Ralph does declare one, when we hear about a service station's confined bear running amok and maiming a few attendants and customers. It serves them darn well right. So, feeling as we do, we never try to make pets of the wild life around us. Just once did we make an exception, and that was none of our seeking. It was more or less wished on us by circumstances.

This is the way it happened. I had asked Coburn's driver to bring me in three lemons, so when Ralph came home with the mail and handed me a little paper bag, I thought I knew what was in it. I tipped it up and dumped the contents out on the kitchen work bench. Then I did a typical female, clutching my pant legs and shrieking, "Eeee! Take that thing away from here." My lemons had suffered a sea-change into a two- or three-day-old skunk.

When I recovered my composure enough to look the thing over, I had to admit it was cute. It was about three inches long, with an equally long tail and about half inch legs, and it was striped black and white like any other

never stopped drinking the warmed canned milk and water until his little stomach was as round and hard—and about as large—as a golf ball. By this time Cookie's four pups were gorged and asleep, so we dumped Rollo in with them. Cookie looked at us, smelled of him, and looked at us again, trying to understand what was expected of her. Cookie definitely was a lady, and she always tried to live up to her station in life. She understood that we meant that she was to take care of this odd-looking addition to her family. So she rolled him over with her nose and, despite his struggles, lapped Rollo thoroughly from stem to stern, just as she washed her own children. After that Rollo belonged. Nobody was going to accuse Cookie of favoritism; and from that day on, Rollo was just another husky puppy, as far as she was concerned.

I think he, himself, thought he was a dog. Certainly the other pups treated him like one of themselves. The whole lot of them played together as puppies do, roughhousing and mock-fighting, chewing each other's tails and ears, and attempting mayhem in any form. At first we used to try to rescue Rollo. The pups were almost ten times as big as he was, and I was afraid he'd get killed. But he didn't thank me at all for my solicitude. When I put him down again at a safe distance from the fray, he'd stamp his hind legs in a towering rage—the skunk method of expressing extreme irritation, and the last step before the gas attack—and rush back to fling himself into the battle. I still don't understand why he didn't get completely ruined. I've often seen one dog grab him by the scruff of the neck while another grabbed his tail, pulling him in opposite directions with all their might, growling and shaking him as puppies will do with a piece of rope. It made my stomach ache to watch, but he apparently loved it for when they released him, he'd always rush in for more. It's my opinion that that twenty-four hours of being lost in the wilderness so early

and we couldn't blame him for that; in fact, Ralph applauded him. We had at that time a cat named Jane, and she and Rollo had always hated each other, for no good reason that we could ever see, for they always left each other strictly alone One evening I had made a chocolate malted milk for Rollo—that was his favorite food—and set it out. Rollo was just starting in on it when Jane appeared around the corner. Rollo stamped violently but Jane continued to approach and sniffed at the saucer She wasn't going to touch the contents, I'm sure, she was just curious. But he had warned her and she had paid no attention. Faster than the eye could follow, he turned end for end, arched his tail over his back, and—whisht! smack into Jane's face at a range of less than a foot. She rolled right over backward, scrambled to her feet, and went off like a bullet She never came back. Presently she took up her abode at the nearest lumber camp

We had been afraid that after the pups and the skunk reached the age where they could eat solid food, Rollo would starve unless we fed him separately. He could never hold his own, we thought, against that gang of ruffians. We might as well have spared ourselves the worry. He was quite capable of looking out for himself. When the crush around the communal pan of puppy biscuit and milk became too great, he would wade right into the middle of the dish, forcing the pups to eat along the edges while he stuffed himself practically into a coma

Rollo became a terribly spoiled brat before the summer had advanced very far We gave him too much attention, and so did the dogs and so did the sports who kept coming in in increasing numbers as the news of our pet skunk spread I never thought to have my social career sponsored by a skunk but that is what it amounted to. I met more new people during that summer than I ever have before or since in the same length of time. Perfect strangers,

and we couldn't blame him for that; in fact, Ralph applauded him. We had at that time a cat named Jane, and she and Rollo had always hated each other, for no good reason that we could ever see, for they always left each other strictly alone. One evening I had made a chocolate malted milk for Rollo—that was his favorite food—and set it out. Rollo was just starting in on it when Jane appeared around the corner. Rollo stamped violently but Jane continued to approach and sniffed at the saucer. She wasn't going to touch the contents, I'm sure, she was just curious. But he had warned her and she had paid no attention. Faster than the eye could follow, he turned end for end, arched his tail over his back, and—whsht! smack into Jane's face at a range of less than a foot. She rolled right over backward, scrambled to her feet, and went off like a bullet She never came back. Presently she took up her abode at the nearest lumber camp

We had been afraid that after the pups and the skunk reached the age where they could eat solid food, Rollo would starve unless we fed him separately He could never hold his own, we thought, against that gang of ruffians. We might as well have spared ourselves the worry. He was quite capable of looking out for himself. When the crush around the communal pan of puppy biscuit and milk became too great, he would wade right into the middle of the dish, forcing the pups to eat along the edges while he stuffed himself practically into a coma.

Rollo became a terribly spoiled brat before the summer had advanced very far We gave him too much attention, and so did the dogs, and so did the sports who kept coming in in increasing numbers as the news of our pet skunk spread I never thought to have my social career sponsored by a skunk but that is what it amounted to. I met more new people during that summer than I ever have before or since in the same length of time. Perfect strangers,

come home at all. We'd meet him sometimes a mile or more down the Carry Road, and he'd run up to us and we'd pick him up. He never forgot us, and we never forgot him. We just grew apart, as those whose interests diverge always grow apart. Finally we stopped seeing him altogether. I don't know what eventually did happen to him—whether he wandered away, or whether he met with an accident. Very few wild animals die of old age. One thing we were glad of then—that if he did meet with death in any of the common swift wilderness forms, at least he was able to go down fighting. We hadn't rendered him defenseless.

Actually I've only been frightened once by animals since I came here to live. That was up at Miller's, and was a completely silly performance. It happened a long time ago, when Cookie was only a puppy. She had an enemy—Miller's older cow—who never overlooked an opportunity to chase her. I don't know how the feud started, and I don't know whether the cow would have hurt Cookie if she had caught her. It may have been just her bovine idea of a game. However that may be, she certainly looked like business as she thundered after that terrified little ball of fur, with her head down, her nostrils flaring, and her tail out stiff behind. I don't blame Cookie for putting her tail between her legs and scuttling.

It was in June, and Alice Miller had a houseful. There were her sister Amy and two small girls, a half dozen men who were working repairing the dam, a woman named Polly Gould who was doing the cooking for them, and her little girl, besides Alice's own family. We went up there one evening to visit with the assembled multitude, and in the course of events, Alice, Amy, Polly and I took the collection of five small children and my small dog up into the back pasture to see if the blueberries were ripe. The two cows and Betty, the horse, were grazing off toward the

extremely rare; and because I was so scared, and the whole thing so ridiculous, my immediate reaction, once we were safe, was unbounded rage. I was mad at Miller's livestock, at Cookie for bringing them down on us like a wolf on the fold, and at myself for running. But I was maddest of all at Ralph and Renny Miller and the crew of workmen off the dam. When we had got our breaths, and the spots had stopped dancing around in front of our eyes, did we see them running anxiously to our aid? We did not! We saw them all lying helpless on Miller's back stoop, weak with laughter

Classed with animals as an A Number One Menace, by females from the city, are what they always refer to as "drunken lumberjacks." I am not a psychiatrist, but as a writer whose stock in trade is human nature, I am interested in all its various manifestations. One of the least explicable to me is the phenomenon of the woman who would not allow such a crude and lusty word as "rape" to pass her well-bred lips, but whose every inflection indicates that that is what she is hoping to be told about when she asks obliquely and with bated breath if I am not afraid of drunken lumberjacks Well, I'm not In the first place, very few of the lumberjacks I see are drunken They may have been when they left civilization, but by the time they get in here, they're only sick and sorry, and in no state to menace anything larger than a day-old chick. In the second place, drunk or sober, they're twice as scared of me as I am of them I hope that settles that question once and for all I'm just a little bored with women who claim to be afraid of men, or who feel either inferior or superior to men, or who consider men as being anything other than so many more people

There are, of course, a few things in the woods that anyone with sense is afraid of. So are there in the city, or on a farm, or at the seashore, or anywhere else, except pos-

xtremely rare; and because I was so scared, and the whole thing so ridiculous, my immediate reaction, once we were safe, was unbounded rage. I was mad at Miller's livestock, at Cookie for bringing them down on us like a wolf on the fold, and at myself for running. But I was maddest of all at Ralph and Kenny Miller and the crew of workmen off the dam. When we had got our breaths, and the spots had stopped dancing around in front of our eyes, did we see them running anxiously to our aid? We did not! We saw them all lying helpless on Miller's back stoop, weak with laughter.

Classed with animals as an A Number One Menace, by females from the city, are what they always refer to as "drunken lumberjacks." I am not a psychiatrist, but as a writer whose stock in trade is human nature, I am interested in all its various manifestations. One of the least explicable to me is the phenomenon of the woman who would not allow such a crude and lusty word as "rape" to pass her well-bred lips, but whose every inflection indicates that that is what she is hoping to be told about when she asks obliquely and with bated breath if I am not afraid of drunken lumberjacks. Well, I'm not. In the first place, very few of the lumberjacks I see are drunken. They may have been when they left civilization, but by the time they get in here, they're only sick and sorry, and in no state to menace anything larger than a day-old chick. In the second place, drunk or sober, they're twice as scared of me as I am of them. I hope that settles that question once and for all. I'm just a little bored with women who claim to be afraid of men, or who feel either inferior or superior to men, or who consider men as being anything other than so many more people.

There are, of course, a few things in the woods that anyone with sense is afraid of. So are there in the city, or on a farm, or at the seashore, or anywhere else, except pos-

I diagnosed it as trees down across the wire. There was nothing to do, so Edith and I ate our supper, brought Rufus downstairs to sleep—a tree had fallen across the roof right over his crib, waking him and starting a leak that dripped onto his pillow—and sat down to read. This sounds like courage and composure, but it was only ignorance

After a while Fred and Ralph came in, soaking wet and full of tales about dodging falling trees all the way from Middle Dam There must be, they said, at least two dozen blowdowns across the road Ralph was, as I had foreseen, sick about the trees in the yard blowing down, but since there was nothing to be done about it, the two of them ate their supper, we all had a game of Mah-jongg, and went to bed

In the morning we woke to a ruined world We couldn't even get across the yard, trees lay criss-crossed in a giant tangle from the back steps to the road The sky line all around us was unrecognizable. Where had towered tops that I regarded as personal friends and eternal landmarks, now gaped ugly holes It was heart-breaking A house you can rebuild; a bridge you can restring, a washed-out road you can fill in But there is nothing you can do about a tree but mourn, and we had lost twenty-eight of our largest trees right in our front yard Somehow it made it worse that the sun shone brightly, and that the still, washed air was as soft and warm as down The day was like a bland and lovely child under whose beauty lay the horror of idiocy.

Fred and Ralph worked all day with axes and a two-man cross-cut, cutting a way through the mess to the road, the woodshed, and other frequently used points. Late in the afternoon, one of the dam crew staying at Miller's managed to get through from above with the news that instead of two dozen trees across the road, there were over

ernment organized a pine-salvaging project. However the pines that had blown down across the Carry Road couldn't be salvaged by them because they had been butchered into every imaginable odd length when the road was cleared out. The idea then was to open a thoroughfare, so every tree lying across the road was cut twice—where the gutters would be, if we had gutters—and the piece in the middle was rolled off to one side. The result was several hundred good pine logs of no commercial value because they were in crazy, hit-or-miss, non-saleable lengths. We had long been planning extensive remodelling of the summer house, building a new shed for the rolling stock, and what not. We didn't object to unorthodox lengths for the jobs we had in mind So Ralph made a deal with the landowners whereby he acquired them to the benefit of all concerned All the next summer he and Gerrish worked like dogs getting these logs into a boom they strung in our boat cove in the Pond, where they would be safe from worms, fire, and rot.

That's easy to write, but it wasn't easy for two men to do. What they lacked in numbers, they had to make up in ingenuity. They finally worked out a rig that was the marvel of all beholders to take the place of the rest of a four-man crew They took the front axle of the deceased Packard, complete with wheels and tires, and equipped it with a drawbar that could be fastened to the rear of the Big Green "Mormon" The butt ends of the logs rode on this, while the top ends dragged But two men can't lift a three-foot green butt eighteen inches off the ground and roll a pair of wheels under it So they built a portable ramp which they carried along in the car, studded with spikes to prevent slipping, and rolled the ends of the logs up onto this, using a combination of cant dog leverage and roll hitches Once the log end lay on top of the ramp, projecting sufficiently ahead, the axle was rolled under, the log

ernment organized a pine-salvaging project. However the pines that had blown down across the Carry Road couldn't be salvaged by them because they had been butchered into every imaginable odd length when the road was cleared out The idea then was to open a thoroughfare, so every tree lying across the road was cut twice—where the gutters would be, if we had gutters—and the piece in the middle was rolled off to one side. The result was several hundred good pine logs of no commercial value because they were in crazy, hit-or-miss, non-saleable lengths. We had long been planning extensive remodelling of the summer house, building a new shed for the rolling stock, and what not. We didn't object to unorthodox lengths for the jobs we had in mind. So Ralph made a deal with the landowners whereby he acquired them to the benefit of all concerned. All the next summer he and Gerrish worked like dogs getting these logs into a boom they strung in our boat cove in the Pond, where they would be safe from worms, fire, and rot.

That's easy to write, but it wasn't easy for two men to do. What they lacked in numbers, they had to make up in ingenuity. They finally worked out a rig that was the marvel of all beholders to take the place of the rest of a four-man crew. They took the front axle of the deceased Packard, complete with wheels and tires, and equipped it with a drawbar that could be fastened to the rear of the Big Green "Mormon" The butt ends of the logs rode on this, while the top ends dragged. But two men can't lift a three-foot green butt eighteen inches off the ground and roll a pair of wheels under it. So they built a portable ramp which they carried along in the car, studded with spikes to prevent slipping, and rolled the ends of the logs up onto this, using a combination of cant dog leverage and roll hitches. Once the log end lay on top of the ramp, projecting sufficiently ahead, the axle was rolled under, the log

with buildings of one sort or another, we'll probably end with an eighty-foot schooner, or something.

The most immediate result of the hurricane is really a legitimate worry—or rather, an increasing of one of our few standard dangers—the danger of forest fire. That's a thing that is never out of our minds, and a thing we have a right to fear, because we have so little control over the starting of a fire. We, ourselves, are almost fanatically careful about matches, and cigarette butts, and lunch fires. Everyone who lives in the woods is. I've known men to get to worrying over whether every ember of a fire they'd made at noon was out, and to back-track eight miles, after dark, just to make sure. But these were woodsmen. People from the Outside aren't conditioned to the fire hazard as we are. They don't mean to be careless probably. They just don't know any better If you're used to throwing a cigarette butt down wherever you happen to finish it, it doesn't register whether it lands on an asphalt pavement or in a brush pile (Just thinking about the latter makes my palms sweat) And fires aren't always started by humans. There are plenty of instances where they have been started by lightning, or even by a bit of broken bottle, acting as a burning glass. This chance element is what brings our heads up and sends us running for the field glasses to scan the horizon at the suspicion of a whiff of wood smoke

It was bad enough before the hurricane, but now it is a hundred times worse. Now the woods are full of dried, dead tops that will burn like tinder. If a fire should start over back of a mountain somewhere, it might take a half a day or more for the fire-fighters to get in to it through the blowdown, instead of two hours as formerly With a brisk breeze behind it, and bone-dry brush to feed on, a fire can travel ten or twelve miles an hour, or even faster. You see, it doesn't burn evenly. It may jump a half a mile over the heads of the fighters, leaving them in an extremely

scripts. The wardens have a right to draft any able-bodied male they may run across and oblige him to fight a forest fire for thirty cents an hour and meals—if the meals can be got to him at his post of duty. Often they can't. Fire wardens are only human, and it's my opinion that nothing delights them more than to force some stray sport, all done up in the expensive outfit that goes with a fifty-thousand-dollar income, to dirty his hands and burn his clothes for a measly thirty cents an hour. I'm a meany, too; I, too, think it's funny.

The other fires were across the river from us between C Pond and Upton. They were started through the carelessness of the river drivers on the Dead Cambridge. We could see the smoke, travelling fast and low on the wind, about four miles away, and at night the skyline pulsed with light. When you can see that variation of glow caused by a whole tree suddenly exploding into flame, then you know the fire is too close for comfort. If the wind had shifted and come drawing up the river valley, as up a gigantic flue, nothing could have saved Forest Lodge. We sat up late nights, during that time.

Then the wind died down and a slow and drizzling rain started, the sort of rain that people living as we do actually pray for, forgetting the fashionable skepticism with which education has veneered us. It was steady, quiet, increasing rain, with the promise of a long wet night in it and, come morning, the surety of sodden woods through which no fire could travel. We upped the porch rockers against the wall to keep the seats dry, and brought the deck chairs up out of the garden. We closed the windows on the southeast side of the house, and placed a pan on the floor under the annoying gable that always leaks a little after a long drought has shrunk the shingles. We dashed out after forgotten clothes on the line, and brought in logs and kindling for the fire-place. It would be safe to have a fire this

You have to, with a doctor usually no nearer than twenty miles—and twenty pretty tough miles, at that. You learn to hold wood that you are splitting by the edge and not by the top, so you won't take off a thumb. I don't have to remember here to look both ways before crossing the road—but I do have to remember always to keep an axe on the off side of the log when I'm limbing out, to carry it over my shoulder with the blade away from my head, and never, never, to take a full swing with it unless I've made sure first that I've got plenty of room behind and above me. These things I no longer have to remind myself to do, I do them quite automatically; and if this seems like odd habitual behavior for one who was brought up more or less as a lady, I can only say that there's no comfort in being a lady with a few inches of cold blue steel imbedded in your skull.

If you get cut by an axe in the woods, all you can do about it is to try to stop the bleeding, disinfect the wound—with salt, probably, as that is most easily available—and tie it up to get well by itself. If you can't stop the bleeding, you can send for the doctor if it will make you feel any better in your mind. Almost certainly, however, the bleeding will have stopped by itself, or the patient will have bled to death, before the doctor can get in, unless the accident occurs in the summertime and there happens to be a doctor staying at Coburn's. The three weapons to use against axe cuts then are (a) sense enough not to get cut, (b) a good working knowledge of how to apply a tourniquet, if the worst occurs, and (c) a philosophical attitude.

Burns are fairly common in the woods, and they're almost always the result of carelessness too. You can easily get burned pouring kerosene into a stove to boost up a slow fire, or by tripping over the cat while carrying a kettle of scalding raspberry jam, or by unscrewing the cap of a boiling car or tractor radiator, or in any one of

was obviously wrong. I *knew* I was going in the right direction. Then I remembered what Fred Davis had said, "The compass is always right." Ralph had told me the same thing many times "*Always* believe the compass." All right, then, I'd give it a try, in spite of my better judgment. I lined up a topless maple about a hundred feet away, pinned the compass back into my pocket, and started across the tangle of spruce and fir blowdown.

That was the most hellish trip I ever took. I was almost never on the ground. Sometimes I was twenty feet in the air, with nothing to step on, with twigs scraping my face, and with the knowledge in my mind that if I slipped here, I could easily break my back and die slowly and horribly, with not a chance in the world of being found. But worse than that was something that wasn't mind or heart or anything else that I've ever felt before, pulling me irresistibly around to the southeast. To go against it, to follow the compass, was almost physical agony. It was something that can't be conveyed to anyone who hasn't experienced it. I would climb laboriously over a tangled jack-pot, and stop and get my breath. All around me, hemming me in, were more towering piles of blown down trees. I would start over a pile of them, and then remember that I was supposed to be following the compass. I would unpin my pocket, take the damn thing out, and look at it. If it was right, my proper route lay almost at right angles to the way I was going. But it *couldn't* be that way! However— I'd pick a landmark by it, put the compass back in my pocket, pin it in and start climbing, and all the time that thing inside me was twisting and turning and pulling me over to the right. Fighting it was harder than fighting the blowdown. I've talked with other people who have been lost, and they all agree with me that the feeling is something that can't be conveyed. It's like being under a spell.

was obviously wrong. I *knew* I was going in the right direction. Then I remembered what Fred Davis had said. "The compass is always right." Ralph had told me the same thing many times. "*Always* believe the compass." All right, then, I'd give it a try, in spite of my better judgment. I lined up a topless maple about a hundred feet away, pinned the compass back into my pocket, and started across the tangle of spruce and fir blowdown.

That was the most hellish trip I ever took. I was almost never on the ground. Sometimes I was twenty feet in the air, with nothing to step on, with twigs scraping my face, and with the knowledge in my mind that if I slipped here, I could easily break my back and die slowly and horribly, with not a chance in the world of being found. But worse than that was something that wasn't mind or heart or anything else that I've ever felt before, pulling me irresistibly around to the southeast. To go against it, to follow the compass, was almost physical agony. It was something that can't be conveyed to anyone who hasn't experienced it. I would climb laboriously over a tangled jack-pot, and stop and get my breath. All around me, hemming me in, were more towering piles of blown down trees. I would start over a pile of them, and then remember that I was supposed to be following the compass. I would unpin my pocket, take the damn thing out, and look at it. If it was right, my proper route lay almost at right angles to the way I was going. But it *couldn't* be that way! However—I'd pick a landmark by it, put the compass back in my pocket, pin it in and start climbing; and all the time that thing inside me was twisting and turning and pulling me over to the right. Fighting it was harder than fighting the blowdown. I've talked with other people who have been lost, and they all agree with me that the feeling is something that can't be conveyed. It's like being under a spell.

pass was obviously wrong. I *knew* I was going in the right direction. Then I remembered what Fred Davis had said, "The compass is always right." Ralph had told me the same thing many times "*Always* believe the compass." All right, then, I'd give it a try, in spite of my better judgment. I lined up a topless maple about a hundred feet away, pinned the compass back into my pocket, and started across the tangle of spruce and fir blowdown.

That was the most hellish trip I ever took. I was almost never on the ground. Sometimes I was twenty feet in the air, with nothing to step on, with twigs scraping my face, and with the knowledge in my mind that if I slipped here, I could easily break my back and die slowly and horribly, with not a chance in the world of being found But worse than that was something that wasn't mind or heart or anything else that I've ever felt before, pulling me irresistibly around to the southeast To go against it, to follow the compass, was almost physical agony It was something that can't be conveyed to anyone who hasn't experienced it. I would climb laboriously over a tangled jack-pot, and stop and get my breath All around me, hemming me in, were more towering piles of blown down trees I would start over a pile of them, and then remember that I was supposed to be following the compass. I would unpin my pocket, take the damn thing out, and look at it If it was right, my proper route lay almost at right angles to the way I was going But it *couldn't* be that way! However—I'd pick a landmark by it, put the compass back in my pocket, pin it in and start climbing, and all the time that thing inside me was twisting and turning and pulling me over to the right Fighting it was harder than fighting the blowdown I've talked with other people who have been lost, and they all agree with me that the feeling is something that can't be conveyed. It's like being under a spell.

pass was obviously wrong. I *knew* I was going in the right direction. Then I remembered what Fred Davis had said. "The compass is always right." Ralph had told me the same thing many times "*Always* believe the compass." All right, then, I'd give it a try, in spite of my better judgment. I lined up a topless maple about a hundred feet away, pinned the compass back into my pocket, and started across the tangle of spruce and fir blowdown.

That was the most hellish trip I ever took. I was almost never on the ground. Sometimes I was twenty feet in the air, with nothing to step on, with twigs scraping my face, and with the knowledge in my mind that if I slipped here, I could easily break my back and die slowly and horribly, with not a chance in the world of being found. But worse than that was something that wasn't mind or heart or anything else that I've ever felt before, pulling me irresistibly around to the southeast. To go against it, to follow the compass, was almost physical agony. It was something that can't be conveyed to anyone who hasn't experienced it. I would climb laboriously over a tangled jack-pot, and stop and get my breath. All around me, hemming me in, were more towering piles of blown down trees. I would start over a pile of them, and then remember that I was supposed to be following the compass. I would unpin my pocket, take the damn thing out, and look at it. If it was right, my proper route lay almost at right angles to the way I was going. But it *couldn't* be that way! However— I'd pick a landmark by it, put the compass back in my pocket, pin it in and start climbing; and all the time that thing inside me was twisting and turning and pulling me over to the right. Fighting it was harder than fighting the blowdown. I've talked with other people who have been lost, and they all agree with me that the feeling is something that can't be conveyed. It's like being under a spell.

the light of reason, we see by how much time and rough usage have reduced them.

I know perfectly well what people mean when they say, "I should think you'd get frightfully out of touch!", but it's a silly expression all the same. Out of touch, indeed! I don't see how anybody, actually, can be "out of touch." The demented are in touch with some world of their own. The castaway is in touch with his physical surroundings, his material needs, his thoughts and his memories. The sleeper has his dreams; and the dead—who can say surely what or where the dead touch?

So I ask sourly, "Out of touch with what?"

The answer is always the same, and always delivered a little vaguely, it seems to me, in my annoyed and hypercritical mood "Oh. the new books, and plays, and music. You know, Culture and world affairs Your own sort of people."

There's no answer to that, except "Oh, nuts!", and ordinarily I don't go around saying "Oh, nuts" to anybody outside the family

The reasons I feel like saying "Oh, nuts" are manifold. Just as a starter, I have often read more new and old books during the preceding year than my interlocutor, and I might add, read them with considerably more attention and appreciation. I don't have to do my reading, you see, for any other reason than my own enjoyment. We happen to have a great many new books, because we are lucky enough to have a rather tenuous connection, through my librarian sister, with a book shop in Boston, and one of the owners—feeling sorry, no doubt, for "Miss Dickinson's poor sister, stuck way off up there in the woods"—sends us, at intervals, boxes of advance copies which are given her by the publishers. These are occasionally bound galley proofs and sometimes regular copies as they will appear on the book stands, except that they have paper covers.

Garden of Proserpine," which doesn't even make sense, but is so musical and beautiful that it doesn't have to mean anything It is full of such lines as "Blind buds that snows have shaken" and "Red strays of ruined springs" Bertrand Russell can make my scalp crawl any old day with such examples of his own particular brand of cold and chiseled prose as the last paragraph of "A Free Man's Worship," which begins "Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark," and ends "—to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power."

What wouldn't I give to be able to write like that!

I'm very sorry to say—and I mean this; I am truly sorry, because I know I miss a lot—that I don't appreciate good music I don't understand it and it doesn't speak to me at all I wish it did, but about the most complicated compositions I can enjoy are Sibelius' "Finlandia" and something called "Kammenoi-Ostrow" by Rubinstein, and these I can hear on the radio often enough to satisfy me If I did comprehend and love classical music, I could still hear it on the radio, for I could listen to the Philharmonic, and it would cost me neither money nor effort. I could sit in my pet rocker with my ski-panted legs folded under me and smoke a cigarette and have a fine binge for myself; but that just isn't my kind of binge.

The same applies to plays. I never was a theater fan When I lived in cities, I missed a great deal of possible pleasure because of this blind spot of mine; but since I have lived here, it has proved to be a blessing. I'd be miserable if I read of the opening of something new and enormously good, and knew that there was no possible way I could get to see it. As it is, my appetite for the dramatic has to be satisfied with the situations that arise in my own life, or the lives of my friends, or in the general world

long and listen to eye-witness accounts of air raids and hour by hour reports on the progress made or not made along the numerous fronts. But it wouldn't help anything, and it would keep me in a constant state of turmoil and indigestion. So we have our fifteen minute dose of every-thing's-going-to-hell each evening, and the rest of the day we try to forget about it. There's not very much tranquillity left in the world today. It may be that in striving to preserve a little of it we are making the best contributions within our powers. Or it may be that this is pure rationalizing, and we are guilty of the most abysmal selfishness.

In our house, when you turn the radio on, it's because someone wants to listen to something specific. As the batteries get low, we listen to fewer and fewer things, saving the power, until the batteries we have ordered arrive, fc what we want most to hear. Elmer Davis, Ezra Stone 1 'The Aldrich Family," and "Information Please" are th ery last things to go. No matter where they stand nation lly, they're at the top of the Rich Poll. If we have a littl more leeway, we listen to Jack Benny's program, partly because we think it's extremely funny, and partly because we're always in hopes of being able to put our finger on the reason why it's so funny. Then there's a program called 'I Love a Mystery," which probably hasn't anything to recommend it at all from an artistic point of view—except the sound-effects—but which we adore. It's full of creeps and horrors and hair-breadth escapes, and the actors are splendid. If there's a prize fight of importance, we listen to that. Ralph and I could once take or leave prize fights, but they are Gerrish's meat, and he's finally managed to get us into the same frame of mind. The idea is that we try to keep our radio in its place. It is our servant, and we try not to let ourselves become its slaves.

I'm not decrying the radio at all. I think it's marvellous—so marvellous that I won't let anyone try to explain to

" I felt at my ease, my appearance was such that my friends would feel called upon to explain to their friends, "You mustn't expect her to look too snappy; but she's awfully good-hearted. When you get to know her, you'll like her."

It's wonderful to sit up here in the woods and look at the pictures in the advertisements of the hats I don't have to wear (It's my belief that a hat should help your face, not do its best to increase a Simple Simon effect) My sole attempt at glamour so far has been the purchase and use of a ten cent bottle of red nail enamel, and this was somewhat less than successful in its purpose I put it on twice, and both times was rewarded by shudders and averted eyes on the parts of Ralph and Gerrish, and wails from Rufus because "Mummy hurt self!" I finally abandoned it and Rufus appropriated it. He painted Kyak's toenails red and slopped some on his fur. The game warden came in, gave the dog one look and said, "I thought you told me your dog wasn't a deer killer" It took some demonstrating to prove to him that Kyak wasn't reeking with the blood of innocent victims, and when that was over I pitched what was left of the enamel into the river

There has been just one time in my life that I regretted bitterly not being beautiful and glamorous and marvellously apparelled, and that happened, as of course it would happen, just before the spring break-up At that moment my wardrobe was at its very lowest ebb as the transition from winter to summer clothes had not yet taken place It consisted of a pair of worn flannel slacks, a pair of really impossible ski pants, and some faded wool shirts Moreover I was about twenty pounds overweight, my hair was as straight as a string, and I couldn't get Outside to have a permanent—not that a permanent would have helped much, but I think it would have given me

own that was proving more and more absorbing. By more I began to get sense. And then—

Then one fine early April day, Alice Miller called me up on the telephone and said with an air that chilled my blood even before I heard the message, "Well, I've got some news for you that you're not going to like! At least, I wouldn't like it, if I were in your boots."

My heart sank. "Now what?" I asked.

"Well, we just had a call from Baltimore on our Outside phone. It was really for you, but of course we took the message as they can't get you on that phone." She was deliberately keeping me in suspense. Before break-up is a slow time in the woods. Then she threw her bomb. "It was from Ralph's first wife. She and Sally are coming in to visit you."

I had thought Sally and her mother were in Haiti. I don't remember what I said to Alice. I do remember, to my shame, walking around the kitchen telling Ralph, "I won't have it. You've got to do something. I simply won't have it!" It really wasn't so much that I *wouldn't* have it, as that I *couldn't* have it. I just couldn't cope with the situation. Here I was, plain, everyday Louise, with a shiny, wind-burned nose and chapped hands, expected on practically no notice to compete with a beautiful cosmopolitan, fresh from the salons of Europe. I didn't have any clothes. I didn't have any conversation. I hadn't been anywhere or done anything interesting. She'd been everywhere. She'd have lots of interesting experiences to talk about. She'd have trunks full of gorgeous clothes. She'd be witty and fascinating.

"I won't have it," I repeated. "You've got to do something."

I know Ralph was stunned by this sudden metamorphosis of house cat into tigress. He just looked at me as though he didn't know me. "But what can I—"

ing that was proving more and more absorbing. In short I began to get sense. And then—

Then one fine early April day, Alice Miller called me up on the telephone and said with an air that chilled my blood even before I heard the message, "Well, I've got some news for you that you're not going to like! At least, I wouldn't like it, if I were in your boots."

My heart sank. "Now what?" I asked.

"Well, we just had a call from Baltimore on our Outside phone. It was really for you, but of course we took the message as they can't get you on that phone." She was deliberately keeping me in suspense. Before break-up is a slow time in the woods. Then she threw her bomb. "It was from Ralph's first wife. She and Sally are coming in to visit you."

I had thought Sally and her mother were in Haiti. I don't remember what I said to Alice. I do remember, to my shame, walking around the kitchen telling Ralph, "I won't have it. You've got to do something. I simply won't have it!" It really wasn't so much that I *couldn't* have it, as that I *couldn't* have it. I just couldn't cope with the situation. Here I was, plain, everyday Louise, with a shiny, wind-burned nose and chapped hands, expected on practically no notice to compete with a beautiful cosmopolitan, fresh from the salons of Europe. I didn't have any clothes. I didn't have any conversation. I hadn't been anywhere or done anything interesting. She'd been everywhere. She'd have lots of interesting experiences to talk about. She'd have trunks full of gorgeous clothes. She'd be witty and fascinating.

"I won't have it," I repeated. "You've got to do something."

I know Ralph was stunned by this sudden metamorphosis of house cat into tigress. He just looked at me as though he didn't know me. "But what can I—"

cloak of outraged virtue. But none thought it would be possible for us to live two minutes under the same roof. That it was possible is owing chiefly to Terp's tact and absolute honesty of purpose. She was the perfect house guest, and she had no ideas whatsoever of breaking up my home. She wanted to leave Sally with us again, and she wanted, before she did it, to ascertain what manner of woman she was handing her child over to for a longer or shorter period. This is a motive that anyone can respect.

I'm afraid, however, that locally I got most of the credit for preserving the status quo. I know exactly what everyone was saying and thinking all around us. I know all about the interminable analyses of the situation, and the speculation that was rife, and the inevitable final conclusion—"Well, all I can say is that Louise is better natured than I'd ever be. *I* wouldn't put up with it!" I began to feel like a character in a Russian novel. There was the snow and the deep woods and the surrounding waste spaces, and in the middle of it we sat, a man and his two wives and assorted children. Terp even has red hair, and in Russian novels someone is always a beautiful redhead. All that was needed to complete the picture was a troika and a wolf pack.

It's always nice to have made a new friend, but this visit gave me more than that. It gave me freedom. It made me realize that the things we fear are almost always things which needn't be feared at all. They are creatures of our imagination. There was never anybody like the Terp of whom I was so jealous, but I would still believe in her and make myself miserable on her account, but for the fortunate chance that Ralph got that hotel in Baltimore on the telephone half an hour too late.

Not long ago, a friend who was about to marry a widower said to me, "Tell me honestly, weren't you ever insanely jealous of Ralph's first wife?"

the U. S. Mail still operates. Because we have more leisure to write letters than we had in civilization, we are actually closer to a great many people than we ever were before. I know all about the great efficiency of the telephone and telegraphy but I still think it's too bad that the old-fashioned habit of long letters has fallen into desuetude. Brevity and speed are all right in business matters, but friendships can't be put on a business basis, even in the matter of communication I like to know what my friends are thinking and feeling If too long a time elapses without my checking up on these things, I find that where once was a friend there is now a pleasant stranger. When I lived in the city, I had lunch and went to the theater with these strangers at fairly frequent intervals Since I took to the woods, I haven't seen them at all, but some of them have become my friends again We've had to fall back on letter writing, you see

There is thus to be said for writing a letter instead of having lunch downtown when you are writing a letter, you are thinking only of the person who is going to receive it Nothing else is bidding for a share of your attention—neither the funny hat on the woman at the next table, nor the quality of the service, nor the nagging worry as to whether that odd sensation around the calf of your leg a moment ago was or was not a run starting in your new stockings In short, there is no static In addition to this, I find it very difficult to discuss intimate matters with anyone. It is embarrassing for me I start talking about the weather as soon as the conversation shows a tendency to get personal On paper though there's nothing I wouldn't hash over Any of my correspondents will probably be glad to corroborate this

Since I have to depend on letters for many of my contacts, especially in the winter, when, perforce, we have very few visitors, I have developed a few loose rules for be-

the U. S. Mail still operates. Because we have more leisure to write letters than we had in civilization, we are actually closer to a great many people than we ever were before. I know all about the great efficiency of the telephone and telegraph, but I still think it's too bad that the old-fashioned habit of long letters has fallen into desuetude. Brevity and speed are all right in business matters, but friendships can't be put on a business basis, even in the matter of communication. I like to know what my friends are thinking and feeling. If too long a time elapses without my checking up on these things, I find that where once was a friend there is now a pleasant stranger. When I lived in the city, I had lunch and went to the theater with these strangers at fairly frequent intervals. Since I took to the woods, I haven't seen them at all, but some of them have become my friends again. We've had to fall back on letter writing, you see.

There is this to be said for writing a letter instead of having lunch downtown: when you are writing a letter, you are thinking only of the person who is going to receive it. Nothing else is bidding for a share of your attention—neither the funny hat on the woman at the next table, nor the quality of the service, nor the nagging worry as to whether that odd sensation around the calf of your leg a moment ago was or was not a run starting in your new stockings. In short, there is no static. In addition to this, I find it very difficult to discuss intimate matters with anyone. It is embarrassing for me. I start talking about the weather as soon as the conversation shows a tendency to get personal. On paper though there's nothing I wouldn't hash over. Any of my correspondents will probably be glad to corroborate this.

Since I have to depend on letters for many of my contacts, especially in the winter, when, perforce, we have very few visitors, I have developed a few loose rules for be-

physical condition, but to the fact that a couple of them are named Crocker. Actually they're a *rugged crew*. They come in here, singly or collectively, at any time of the year, and by every conceivable method, snowboat, snowshoe, dog team (Stumpy once owned a dog team, but like us decided it wasn't worth the trouble), boat, canoe (Stumpy has some aluminum canoes with outboard motors, that are the marvel of all beholders), and, if necessary, on foot through the woods. They haven't arrived by airplane yet, but that will come as Ralph Smart was a pilot in the last war. It doesn't make any difference how or when they come, we're always enchanted to see Stump and Big and Bill and Ralph. It makes it nice that one of them is named Ralph, too, since that is also Gerrish's first name. When the Crocks are here, all I have to do is request, "Ralph, get me a pail of water, will you?" and I get three. I accomplish this by carefully not looking directly at any one of the three Ralphs.

The Crocks presumably come in here for a rest, but they have the strangest notions of resting that I ever heard of. They must endorse the theory that a change is a rest. The minute they get here, they start splitting wood, or going on jaunts to B Pond, or helping with whatever is the current project around the place. Stumpy and I always plan to go to Sunday Pond across country by compass, just to show it can be done, but so far the world has still to be shown, by us, at least. Meanwhile, my Ralph and the others sneer audibly. Bill is the most normal in his choice of amusements. If it's summer, he goes fishing, which is all right It's even all right to fish as he does, about ten hours a day. Gerrish adores Bill because he's always crazy to fish, and goes too Big spent all one Sunday morning, when Ralph was cleaning up the hurricane pine along the Carry, understudying the driver of a tractor that Jim Barnett had very kindly let Ralph have the use

friends and acquaintances range in geographical origin from Alice Miller, who was born in Andover, Maine, to a lumber camp cook named Roland Thibault, who was born in Saskatchewan and arrived here via Alaska and the West Coast.

In addition to the people we see, we also have friends whom I, at least, have never seen. Joe Mooney at the Brown Farm is one of these. I've talked with Joe countless times on the telephone; we have some very spirited encounters, yet I've never laid eyes on him. Joe is quick on the trigger. He can and does come back instantly with a pertinent comment upon any situation; but unfortunately for purposes of illustration it is usually unprintable. Joe is a swell guy. Johnny West was another. I never spoke to him in my life, I wouldn't have known who he was if I'd met him face to face on the Carry Road; I don't imagine he knew any more about me than my name and where I lived, if he knew that. But I always felt comfortable in my mind when I heard Johnny West go over.

Johnny West was a flyer who ran an air service out of Berlin, N. H., up through the lake country, and anywhere else for that matter. It wasn't a very big business and it didn't run on any regular schedules, but if you had to go somewhere in a hurry either into or out of the woods, you could call up the Brown Farm, who would call Berlin, and get Johnny to come and get you. His plane had pontoons in the summer and skis in the winter—he could always find a lake to set his crate down on in our country where landing fields don't exist—and it was always painted red. We'd hear an airplane motor and go out and look. There high up through the tree tops, we'd see a flash of scarlet.

"There goes Johnny West," we'd say to each other. "Wonder where he's going."

We might well wonder. He did the oddest business, I

of a mountain, I arrived breathless and exhausted at my goal just in time to see a fat dowager in printed chiffon drive up in a limousine to park between me and the view. I'm going to be awfully annoyed if some day I stagger out of the woods onto the shore of B Pond, after negotiating that rough trail, just in time to see a plane full of play-boys and girls make a landing.

Johnny West was a beautiful flyer. When he set his plane down on a lake, it was like seeing a red maple leaf flutter to the water. He was company for us, and he made us feel secure. We knew that if something perfectly dreadful happened—something beyond our ability to handle, like double pneumonia or a broken back—we could always get Johnny West to fly a doctor in, or fly us out. He saved a woman's life up in Parmachenee by flying a doctor in in the middle of a bitter winter night, about a year before his death

Johnny West is dead. He died when his plane struck a high tension wire in the course of a forced landing, just as the early winter night was drawing in I hope it was the way he would have chosen to die, but I don't know. I didn't know Johnny West. He was nothing to me but a flash of red across a lonely sky, and a thin, steady throbbing over the noise of the river. He was nothing to me but a name—and our margin of safety.

Aunt Hat is even further removed from my orbit than Johnny West was; she must have died years before I ever dreamed of coming into Maine. She didn't even live here. Her place of business was in Bangor, when that was still a lumber town. But Aunt Hat nonetheless is a very real person to me You see, instead of going to the theater, we who have taken to the woods while away some of our long winter evenings sitting around each other's kitchens, drinking coffee, eating doughnuts, and talking. Talk is the backbone of our social life. It was during one of these

each other. Like I told you, I was working for a feller that ran a livery stable in Bangor. I was a pretty good hand with horses, and after he'd sort of tried me out with the old hacks he had in there for two-three weeks, he figured he could trust me, and he put me in charge of his show rig."

Renny sighed and his blue eyes grew dreamy. "Now there was something you don't see no more," he said nostalgically. "That rig was the prettiest sight I ever laid eyes on. Four coal black horses, he had—not a white hair nor a blemish on any one of 'em. Just like peas in a pod, they were. Them horses was curried twice a day till they shone, and the boss kept 'em so full of oats they danced instead of walking. Them horses was so proud of themselves, by God, they made a man proud to be seen with 'em. He had a set of white harness with silver buckles made special, and it was as much as my job was worth to let a speck of dust get on that rigging. Every time it was used, I had to clean it and do it up in fresh tissue paper. White plumes it had, too, kind of sprouting off them four black foreheads, and he had a big white carry-all, with black cushions and silver trimmings. On either side of the driver's seat was a big silver lamp, and the whip set in a silver whip-socket. The driver had a uniform, sort of, that he had to wear, in keeping with the rest of it—tight, white britches, and a black cut-away coat and white gloves, and a silk hat with a bunch of white ribbons on the side of it. You'd thought I'd have felt like a fool in that outfit, me being about seventeen at the time, and fresh off the farm. But after I got to know them horses, I wouldn't have any more disgraced them by making them appear in a public place with me in my work clothes than I'd have let them go hungry. The boss hired this rig out for swell picnics and such, and I guess the biggest times of my life then was to go spanking down the main street of Bangor on that

on getting an early start, before there was too many people on the streets. But she thought different.

"'What?' she says. 'Go sneaking through town like that at this ungodly hour and throw away all that free advertising? Like Hell, young man! You come back here at ten o'clock, and you can put in the time till then on that silver-work. It may shine bright enough for the Methodist Sunday School picnic, but it ain't bright enough for Aunt Hat!'

"We got going about half past ten. There was four seats besides the driver's, and Aunt Hat piled three girls in each seat. They was all dressed alike in black satin, and they had white feather boas around their necks and big black hats with white willow plumes. Sounds kind of plain, but believe me it wasn't. Must have been the way they wore them outfits, but they looked a sight flashier than any red dress I ever see. Aunt Hat was dressed the same, only she had a big gold chain around her neck and a watch pinned on her bosom. I was wondering where she was going to sit, she not being spare, exactly, when she hollered to me, 'Where's your manners? Get that rump of yours off that seat and give a lady a hand. I'm sitting up in front with you.'

"I'd counted on skirting around the center of town, but I see there was no use even thinking about that. So I hunched my head down into my collar and tried to look inconspicuous while I let the horses out a little, so's to get it over with quick. Next I knew, Aunt Hat had her elbow in my ribs, and for a woman as well larded as she was, she had a right sharp elbow.

"'You hold in them horses, or I'll skin you. Hold up your chin and throw out your chest. There ain't a man on this street that wouldn't swap places with you right now, and don't you think different. You'll drive this rig and

on getting an early start, before there was too many people on the streets. But she thought different.

" 'What?' she says. 'Go sneaking through town like that at this ungodly hour and throw away all that free advertising? Like Hell, young man! You come back here at ten o'clock; and you can put in the time till then on that silver-work. It may shine bright enough for the Methodist Sunday School picnic, but it ain't bright enough for Aunt Hat!'

"We got going about half past ten. There was four seats besides the driver's, and Aunt Hat piled three girls in each seat. They was all dressed alike in black satin, and they had white feather boas around their necks and big black hats with white willow plumes. Sounds kind of plain, but believe me, it wasn't. Must have been the way they wore them outfits but they looked a sight flashier than any red dress I ever see. Aunt Hat was dressed the same, only she had a big gold chain around her neck and a watch pinned on her bosom. I was wondering where she was going to sit, she not being spare, exactly, when she hollered to me, 'Where's your manners? Get that rump of yours off that seat and give a lady a hand. I'm sitting up in front with you.'

"I'd counted on skirting around the center of town, but I see there was no use even thinking about that. So I hunched my head down into my collar and tried to look inconspicuous while I let the horses out a little, so's to get it over with quick. Next I knew, Aunt Hat had her elbow in my ribs, and for a woman as well larded as she was, she had a right sharp elbow.

" 'You hold in them horses, or I'll skin you. Hold up your chin and throw out your chest. There ain't a man on this street that wouldn't swap places with you right now, and don't you think different. You'll drive this rig and

on getting an early start, before there was too many people on the streets. But she thought different.

"'What?' she says 'Go sneaking through town like that at this ungodly hour and throw away all that free advertising? Like Hell, young man! You come back here at ten o'clock; and you can put in the time till then on that silver-work. It may shine bright enough for the Methodist Sunday School picnic, but it ain't bright enough for Aunt Hat!'

"We got going about half past ten. There was four seats besides the driver's, and Aunt Hat piled three girls in each seat. They was all dressed alike in black satin, and they had white feather boas around their necks and big black hats with white willow plumes. Sounds kind of plain, but believe me, it wasn't. Must have been the way they wore them outfits, but they looked a sight flashier than any red dress I ever see. Aunt Hat was dressed the same, only she had a big gold chain around her neck and a watch pinned on her bosom. I was wondering where she was going to sit, she not being spare, exactly, when she hollered to me, 'Where's your manners? Get that rump of yours off that seat and give a lady a hand. I'm sitting up in front with you.'

"I'd counted on skirting around the center of town, but I see there was no use even thinking about that. So I hunched my head down into my collar and tried to look inconspicuous, while I let the horses out a little, so's to get it over with quick. Next I knew, Aunt Hat had her elbow in my ribs; and for a woman as well larded as she was, she had a right sharp elbow.

"'You hold in them horses, or I'll skin you. Hold up your chin and throw out your chest. There ain't a man on this street that wouldn't swap places with you right now, and don't you think different. You'll drive this rig and

Ye Portals Everlasting,' but what it brings to mind them gates Unfold—that's just what they did do, and we drove through with a flourish. The Grounds was full of folks getting their exhibits ready, and Aunt Hat says, 'Drive around the race track, and drive like you did back in Bangor.' She shoved my hat over one ear, and off we started The crowd all come running to the rail to see us, and somebody started to cheer. Round we went, and the cheer growing louder all the time, till when we come around again and drove off, it was bedlam let loose. Aunt Hat never batted an eyelash When we pulled up in front of her tent she ordered the girls down, kind of crisp like, but pleased, too Then she says to me, 'Thank you, Renny. You come back and get us Saturday night,' as genteel as-you could ask

'She was a great Aunt Hat After that I took her and the girls out on plenty of airings and picnics. She'd always ask for me when she ordered the rig The Boss didn't have a look-in no more"

Ralph said, just to keep the record straight, "Then you weren't a customer of Aunt Hat's, at all?"

Renny looked at him "Customer, hell Anybody could be a customer I was a friend!"

No, poor Riches, we don't have plays and music and contact with sophisticated minds, and a round of social engagements All we have are sun and wind and rain, and space in which to move and breathe All we have are the forests, and the calm expanses of the lakes, and time to call our own All we have are the hunting and fishing and the swimming, and each other.

We don't see pictures in famous galleries But the other day, after a sleet storm that had coated the world with a sheath of ice, I saw a pine grosbeak in a little poplar tree. The setting sun slanted through a gap in the black wall

Every now and then, someone along the lakes is taken out to an asylum. I thought Cliff ought to go out on a spree. Three years is too long a time to stay in the woods.

Or so I thought then. I didn't know that it would be over four years before I myself saw the Outside; and if I had known it, I wouldn't have believed that the time could pass so quickly and lightly, that season could roll so smoothly into season, and year into year.

I didn't spend the whole four years sitting in my own back yard, of course, unless you interpret back yard loosely as stretching from here to the border. I covered the territory hereabouts fairly thoroughly.

For example, Gerrish and I make at least one annual trip to B Pond. It's supposed to be a fishing trip, but we've never yet caught any fish. There are some enormous old trout in there, and once in a while someone brings one out. They're pretty cagey—that's why they've lived to be enormous—but we always hope. This hope is one of the reasons why we continue to go. The other is that we like B Pond

B Pond deserves a better name. It should be called Benediction Pond, or Sanctuary Lake. It might even be called the Pool of Proserpine:

> "Here, where the world is quiet,
> Here, where all trouble seems
> Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
> In doubtful dreams of dreams . . ."

There is that feeling of remoteness and calm and timelessness about it that makes the scramble of ordinary life seem like a half-forgotten and completely pointless dream. It just lies there in a fold in the hills, open to the sky and wind and weather. Ducks and loons breed in its coves, the

bration with the earth, disturbing nothing as one treads. However that may be, this was one of those days.

We got up before dawn and ate breakfast by lamplight. The stove didn't sulk or smoke, and neither the oatmeal nor the bacon burned. The coffee was good—hot, strong, and clear. When I put up our lunch, the bread sliced without crumbling, and the ham curled pink and thin from under the knife. The butter was just right to spread, firm but not hard. I found a box at once that was just the correct size for our sandwiches and bananas, and I didn't forget sugar and canned milk for the coffee we would make at noon over a camp-fire Gerrish came in from the garden with a canful of the liveliest, juiciest worms a fish could hope to see. The shiners that we had been keeping in a minnow trap down in the river had neither escaped nor died, and we found a tobacco box that was ideal for carrying them None of our tackle had been mislaid or broken, and Ralph didn't wake up and come down and sneer at us for going to B Pond

We went up the road and across Pond-in-the-River Dam just as the sunlight struck the tops of the trees on the ridge The valley was still in shadow, with steam rising white from the churning water and turning to a lovely pearly pink as it reached the sun-shot air above. I knew how fish feel as they swim about in the depths and look up to see the light of day above them We went into the woods and climbed the ridge, with the sound of the river fading behind and below us I never can tell exactly when I stop hearing the river. It fades and fades, but still is there Then suddenly it is there no longer, and the silence is much louder than the roar ever was.

For once I could keep up with Gerrish with no effort Usually he has to dawdle, which is terrible for him; or I trot, which is terrible for me; or we strike a working com-

bration with the earth, disturbing nothing as one treads. However that may be, this was one of those days.

We got up before dawn and ate breakfast by lamplight. The stove didn't sulk or smoke, and neither the oatmeal nor the bacon burned. The coffee was good—hot, strong, and clear. When I put up our lunch, the bread sliced without crumbling, and the ham curled pink and thin from under the knife. The butter was just right to spread, firm but not hard. I found a box at once that was just the correct size for our sandwiches and bananas, and I didn't forget sugar and canned milk for the coffee we would make at noon over a camp-fire. Gerrish came in from the garden with a canful of the liveliest, juiciest worms a fish could hope to see. The shiners that we had been keeping in a minnow trap down in the river had neither escaped nor died, and we found a tobacco box that was ideal for carrying them. None of our tackle had been mislaid or broken, and Ralph didn't wake up and come down and sneer at us for going to B Pond.

We went up the road and across Pond-in-the-River Dam just as the sunlight struck the tops of the trees on the ridge. The valley was still in shadow, with steam rising white from the churning water and turning to a lovely pearly pink as it reached the sun-shot air above. I knew how fish feel as they swim about in the depths and look up to see the light of day above them. We went into the woods and climbed the ridge, with the sound of the river fading behind and below us. I never can tell exactly when I stop hearing the river. It fades and fades, but still is there. Then suddenly it is there no longer, and the silence is much louder than the roar ever was.

For once I could keep up with Gerrish with no effort. Usually he has to dawdle, which is terrible for him; or I trot, which is terrible for me; or we strike a working com-

pull and recovery were like an opiate, and time stopped. Two loons appeared from somewhere and swam out to look us over.

Loons are my very favorite birds in all the world. This pair circled around us, curious and unafraid, turning their big hammer-heads pertly and halloo-ing back and forth about us. They showed off, diving and staying under water for incredible periods, and bobbing back to the surface in unexpected places. They stood on their tails and stretched their huge wings, and rolled from side to side, smoothing and preening their broad white bosoms. Then they looked at us again. We were really just as funny as they had thought in the first place. They exchanged glances and their weird laughter echoed from the hills. My eye caught Gerrish's, and in a flash there were four of us laughing crazily instead of two.

Nothing could go wrong that day. A breeze came up, but it only crisped the surface of the water, without making rowing a chore. Big, fleece-topped clouds rolled up from the horizon, breaking the smooth blue of the sky into lovely patterns and sending their shadows chasing over the far hillsides; but they never came near the sun. We went by a little point, and I said, "Isn't that a pretty place!" It was. It was covered with grass and a low growth of scarlet-stemmed bushes. A gray ledge cropped out along the water's edge, and a little clump of white birches, budding misty green, leaned over its own image. Just as Gerrish turned his head to look, a red doe stepped out of the black spruce copse behind and stood with her head high, looking at us. That would never happen again in a hundred years, and I'm glad I have a witness that it happened then.

Finally Gerrish said, "'Bout time we were leaving, ain't it?" He rowed a few strokes. "Noticed anything missing?"

We came out at the lean-to, hot and disgusted and tired, and Gerrish held out his hand for the key. Of course—oh, so utterly and completely of course! I didn't have the key. It was too good a padlock to break, although by then only its strength, and no ethical consideration, deterred us from breaking it. We were mad. We'd come to B Pond to fish, and we were going to fish, if we had to build a raft and paddle it with our hands

It didn't quite come to that. We found an abandoned and water-logged old boat drawn up in the bushes, along with a pair of home-made oars. It leaked quite a lot, but by bailing with our bait can—we dumped the worms out into the boat, where they squirmed around our feet—we thought we could keep afloat

"We ain't got much time," Gerrish said. "You start rowing while I set the tackle up"

There was a nasty, biting little wind blowing, and the water was gray and choppy. The boat handled very badly, and pretty soon a fine, chilling rain set in. I didn't chill much I was working too hard keeping up steerage-way. Every time I seemed to be getting somewhere, the water started coming in over the tops of my boots and I had to bail, while the wind drifted us back the way we had come. I could feel a blister developing

Gerrish in the meantime had his gear laid out on the stern seat and was assembling it He had a gang-hook full of worms on the end, and along the leader a couple of drop hooks, Archer spinners, spoons, and various gadgets It was a very imposing and lethal array.

"There!" he said finally, with a craftsman's satisfaction, and threw it grandly over the side.

He hadn't tied it to the line. Paralyzed, we watched it sink irrevocably out of sight. Then we looked dumbly at each other.

Gerrish found words first He had a very sound sugges-

plenitude. We come home, wind-burned and juice-stained, with forty or fifty quarts; but no one could tell we had ever been there.

At night, after being at Prospect, I lie in bed and see great clusters of berries slide by endlessly against my closed lids. They haunt me. There are so many of them yet unpicked, so many that never will be picked. The birds and bears and foxes will eat a few, but most of them will drop off at the first frost, to return to the sparse soil of Prospect whatever of value they borrowed from it. Nature is strictly moral. There is no attempt to cheat the earth by means of steel vault or bronze coffin. I hope that when I die I too may be permitted to pay at once my oldest outstanding debt, to restore promptly the minerals and salts that have been lent to me for the little while that I have use for blood and bone and flesh.

Then there is Sunday Pond, small and remote, with a cliff on the north shore. You can see right across the Carry from that cliff, from Richardson to Umbagog. There is the Sandbank across the lake, where the best swimming is; and Smooth Ledge with the river raging around a great out-cropping of rock. The loveliest pool on the river is at the Foot of the Island, and at Long Pool the deer come to drink and a disreputable old bank-beaver lives. There is the Pocket of the Pond, running up through a hellish black cedar swamp to a tiny icy spring. And there is rumored to be a nameless little pond somewhere up on the hog-back between the Carry Road and Sunday Brook. No one knows exactly where it is. No one knows, really, if it exists at all. But some day soon I'm going to find out. If I get lost, perhaps they'll name the pond after me—if there is a pond. That's the surest way to achieve immortality in this country. Who would have heard of Cluley if he hadn't been drowned in the rips?

Gerrish [illegible] years ramming around the woods, and I

ing my pet needle the week before, and all the talking I had done about it.

"Haven't you got another one?" Ralph asked.

"Certainly. I've got dozens. But this one was different. It was balanced just right."

"Well, for God's sake! Whoever heard of a balanced needle? You're nuts."

Of course, he often says "You're nuts" to me. But hadn't he looked at me queerly this time? *Was* it odd to think that a needle could have correct balance? I didn't think so—but how could I tell?

I thought of my Columbiana Pump pencil. It was painted cream-color with gold lettering on it, and it was round. I don't like hexagonal pencils. They hurt my fingers. Most round ones, especially free, advertising pencils, have specks of grit in the graphite. Not my Columbiana Pump pencil, though. The lead was soft and smooth. It was the best pencil I had ever taken in hand, so I said it was mine. I hid it in my mending basket, and nobody was supposed even to think about it. And then one day it was gone.

I flew into a froth. You know:—"Considering the very few things I'm fussy about around here, I should certainly think that when I ask to have a measly little pencil left alone, it could be left alone. I'll find out who took my Columbiana Pump pencil, and when I do—" You can imagine.

It didn't seem to me to be an unreasonable attitude, but how could I be sure? Do sane people go into rages about pencils? Do they make horrible threats? I didn't know, and whom could I depend on to tell me honestly? I remembered the clerk from Number One saying pitifully, "I think I'm going crazy. Do you think I am?" I remembered my answer: "Of course not. Crazy people don't wonder

ing my pet needle the week before, and all the talking I had done about it.

"Haven't you got another one?" Ralph asked.

"Certainly. I've got dozens. But this one was different. It was balanced just right."

"Well, for God's sake! Whoever heard of a balanced needle? You're nuts."

Of course, he often says "You're nuts" to me. But hadn't he looked at me queerly this time? *Was* it odd to think that a needle could have correct balance? I didn't think so—but how could I tell?

I thought of my Columbiana Pump pencil. It was painted cream-color with gold lettering on it, and it was round I don't like hexagonal pencils They hurt my fingers. Most round ones, especially free advertising pencils, have specks of grit in the graphite Not my Columbiana Pump pencil; though The lead was soft and smooth. It was the best pencil I had ever taken in hand, so I said it was mine I hid it in my mending basket, and nobody was supposed even to think about it And then one day it was gone

I flew into a froth You know —"Considering the very few things I'm fussy about around here, I should certainly think that when I ask to have a measly little pencil left alone, it could be left alone I'll find out who took my Columbiana Pump pencil, and when I do—" You can imagine

It didn't seem to me to be an unreasonable attitude, but how could I be sure? Do sane people go into rages about pencils? Do they make horrible threats? I didn't know, and whom could I depend on to tell me honestly? I remembered the clerk from Number One saying pitifully, "I think I'm going crazy. Do you think I am?" I remembered my answer, "Of course not. Crazy people don't wonder

ing my pet needle the week before, and all the talking I had done about it.

"Haven't you got another one?" Ralph asked.

"Certainly I've got dozens But this one was different. It was balanced just right."

"Well, for God's sake! Whoever heard of a balanced needle? You're nuts."

Of course, he often says "You're nuts" to me. But hadn't he looked at me queerly this time? Was it odd to think that a needle could have correct balance? I didn't think so—but how could I tell?

I thought of my Columbiana Pump pencil. It was painted cream-color with gold lettering on it, and it was round I don't like hexagonal pencils They hurt my fingers Most round ones, especially free, advertising pencils, have specks of grit in the graphite Not my Columbiana Pump pencil; though. The lead was soft and smooth. It was the best pencil I had ever taken in hand, so I said it was mine I hid it in my mending basket, and nobody was supposed even to think about it. And then one day it was gone

I flew into a froth You know—"Considering the very few things I'm fussy about around here. I should certainly think that when I ask to have a measly little pencil left alone, it could be left alone I'll find out who took my Columbiana Pump pencil, and when I do—" You can imagine

It didn't seem to me to be an unreasonable attitude, but how could I be sure? Do sane people go into rages about pencils? Do they make horrible threats? I didn't know, and whom could I depend on to tell me honestly? I remembered the clerk from Number One saying pitifully, "I think I'm going crazy Do you think I am?" I remembered my answer, "Of course not. Crazy people don't wonder

why he couldn't add Rufus and me to the load. If I'd just be ready to start around noon—

Ordinarily to get to Upton from here is a problem. You can walk seven terrible miles, or you can go down Umbagog in a boat—if you can get a boat and the ice is out—or you can go to the Arm and then drive thirty-odd miles around over East B Hill. To be able to ride out on the tractor was a break. You can't do it just any old time. There is no road at all. It's possible only when there is enough snow to pack into a reasonably smooth surface. There are limits to what even a tractor will do. So I accepted the invitation with alacrity.

Then the question of what to wear reared its ugly head. Rufus was all right. He had a fairly new snow suit. But as for me—

"Don't give *me* any of that 'I haven't got a thing that's fit to be seen' business," Ralph begged. "That's what women always say."

Maybe it *is*, *but for once it was absolutely and literally true*. I *didn't* have a thing that was fit to be seen, even in far from dressy Upton. I almost didn't have a thing, period. I hadn't bought anything but woods clothes for five years. Woods clothes would have been all right, but even Upton has prejudices in favor of reasonable neatness and cleanliness. My old ski pants had holes in the knees and seat, and my newer ones were filthy and I didn't have time to wash them. I thought briefly of the days gone by when I had worried over such esoteric details as the exact shade of my stockings. Now I had one pair of silk stockings, five years old, and when I put them on they went to pieces, rotten from lying in the drawer. Mice had eaten the shoestrings out of my one pair of Outside shoes.

Well, that was all right. I didn't have any overshoes, anyhow, so I could wear what was left of the silk stockings, for something to fasten my garters to and hold my

one of Jim Barnett's daughters, and that he had four children, one of whom was Rufus' age almost to the day. I knew these things as I know who isn't speaking to whom in Upton, and why, without ever having seen any of the characters in the drama But I didn't know Paul Fuller.

It didn't make any difference. "Hi, Louise," he said before Ralph could go into his introduction. "Four years since you been out, isn't it; and Rufus hasn't ever been out at all. Well, he's going to get an eyeful. You can ride on the big sled, next to the pig crates. Keep an eye on them, will you? Don't want to lose the pigs off. Let's see, the last time you was out must have been when you and Ralph—"

I don't know where I ever got the impression that the grapevine only works one way—that I sit up in the woods, invisible and inaudible, collecting my data. It came as a distinct shock that, while I knew that the youngest Fuller child is allergic to tomatoes, the Fuller family undoubtedly knew all about the loose filling in my second left upper molar.

We crossed the river on a corduroy bridge that bowed and quivered under the weight of the tractors. I sat on a pile of lumber, beds, and horse-blankets, twelve feet above the ground. There was no road and the sled had no springs. Very shortly I felt as if my spine were coming through the top of my head. I looked forward to where Edgar was hunched in the saddle of the tractor, fighting his machine. It would crawl slowly and powerfully up an outcropping of ledge, balance, and come down *zoonk!* on the other side. Every time that happened—and it happened about every sixty seconds—I saw six inches of daylight between Edgar and the seat. I shuddered for him and took a look at the pig crates, which were inching toward the rear of the load The pigs weren't happy, either The only one who was happy, as far as I could see, was Rufus. Tractors

one of Jim Barnett's daughters, and that he had four children, one of whom was Rufus' age almost to the day. I knew these things as I know who isn't speaking to whom in Upton, and why, without ever having seen any of the characters in the drama. But I didn't know Paul Fuller.

It didn't make any difference. "Hi, Louise," he said before Ralph could go into his introduction. "Four years since you been out, isn't it; and Rufus hasn't ever been out at all. Well, he's going to get an eyeful. You can ride on the big sled next to the pig crates. Keep an eye on them, will you? Don't want to lose the pigs off. Let's see, the last time you was out must have been when you and Ralph—"

I don't know where I ever got the impression that the grapevine only works one way—that I sit up in the woods, invisible and inaudible, collecting my data. It came as a distinct shock that, while I knew that the youngest Fuller child is allergic to tomatoes, the Fuller family undoubtedly knew all about the loose filling in my second left upper molar.

We crossed the river on a corduroy bridge that bowed and quivered under the weight of the tractors. I sat on a pile of lumber, beds, and horse-blankets, twelve feet above the ground. There was no road and the sled had no springs. Very shortly I felt as if my spine were coming through the top of my head. I looked forward to where Edgar was hunched in the saddle of the tractor, fighting his machine. It would crawl slowly and powerfully up an outcropping of ledge, balance, and come down *zoonk!* on the other side. Every time that happened—and it happened about every sixty seconds—I saw six inches of daylight between Edgar and the seat. I shuddered for him and took a look at the pig crates, which were inching toward the rear of the load. The pigs weren't happy, either. The only one who was happy, as far as I could see, was Rufus. Tractors

the road, after our collection of angular antiques. It was odd to go into a house that had electric lights and to have Merna say, "Sally, run up to the store and get two pounds of sugar." I had forgotten that people lived near enough stores to be able to run up to them at a moment's notice. I ran, too, for the novelty of it, and we took Rufus along. He'd never been in a store before, and he couldn't believe his eyes. I bought him his first candy bar, and he didn't quite know what to do with it. It didn't take him long to find out, though. Probably buying it was an example of misguided motherly indulgence.

There were several people in the store, and they all said, "Hi, Louise. How does it seem to be out?" Sally told me their names, which were familiar to me, and now I sorted them out to go with the right faces. They didn't seem like strangers and they didn't treat me like a stranger. I had a fine time. Albert Allen gave me a bag of carrots to take home, and Jim Barnett tried to give Rufus a pair of white rats, but there I drew the line. White rats give me the creeps. Rufus forgot his disappointment in the excitement of viewing the Allens' hens. Horses, cows and pigs he had seen before, but never a hen. He was fascinated. We kept losing him and finding him leaning transfixed against the hen-yard fence. He watched the cows being milked, too, with amazement. Milk heretofore had been something that came out of a can. He saw a new little calf and a lot of things that turned out to be dogs. I suppose it is news to one whose entire dog experience has been Kyak that a Cocker spaniel is a dog, and, surprisingly, so are such divergent types as setters and toy bulls. It must be baffling. But he loved best of all the other children. It was a discovery that he and Junior Miller weren't carrying the whole burden of perpetuating the race.

The things I loved best, next to watching Rufus react, were eating someone else's cooking and meeting so many

the road, after our collection of angular antiques. It was odd to go into a house that had electric lights, and to have Merna say, "Sally, run up to the store and get two pounds of sugar." I had forgotten that people lived near enough stores to be able to run up to them at a moment's notice. I ran, too, for the novelty of it, and we took Rufus along. He'd never been in a store before, and he couldn't believe his eyes. I bought him his first candy bar and he didn't quite know what to do with it. It didn't take him long to find out, though. Probably buying it was an example of misguided motherly indulgence.

There were several people in the store, and they all said, "Hi, Louise. How does it seem to be out?" Sally told me their names, which were familiar to me and now I sorted them out to go with the right faces. They didn't seem like strangers and they didn't treat me like a stranger. I had a fine time. Albert Allen gave me a bag of carrots to take home, and Jim Barnett tried to give Rufus a pair of white rats, but there I drew the line. White rats give me the creeps. Rufus forgot his disappointment in the excitement of viewing the Allens' hens. Horses, cows and pigs he had seen before, but never a hen. He was fascinated. We kept losing him and finding him leaning transfixed against the hen-yard fence. He watched the cows being milked, too, with amazement. Milk heretofore had been something that came out of a can. He saw a new little calf and a lot of things that turned out to be dogs. I suppose it is news to one whose entire dog experience has been Kyak that a Cocker spaniel is a dog, and, surprisingly, so are such divergent types as setters and toy bulls. It must be baffling. But he loved best of all the other children. It was a discovery that he and Junior Miller weren't carrying the whole burden of perpetuating the race.

The things I loved best, next to watching Rufus react, were eating someone else's cooking and meeting so many

of us, they wore flannel shirts, sheepskins, and corduroys. Half-way between, a group of farmers exchanged views on politics, crops, and the price of grain, while over in a corner the ribald lumberjack element swapped dirty stories and lent color to the scene with their bright mackinaws and high boots. The game warden, tough and trim in his blue uniform, came in and sat down beside our leading poacher. The one had had the other thrown into jail the preceding fall, over a little matter of an untagged deer, but that didn't seem to shadow their social relations. The town's oldest citizen, Silas Peasley, from whom Rufus gets his middle name and in whom every one of us took an affectionate pride held court down one side of the room. We all went up and spoke to him, and we all got together later and sadly agreed that he had failed considerable. Last year, on his eighty-second birthday, he had been able to leap into the air and click his heels three times. It would be a wonder if he could manage twice this year.

When the meeting was called to order, things simmered down. The children went out-doors, the men tip-toed to seats, and the women lowered their voices. In theory, they have a hand in the town government, but unless a really hotter issue is at stake they sacrifice the franchise for speculation as to whether the town's latest marriage was a shotgun affair or not. The first business on the Warrant was the electing of a moderator, and someone nominated Cedric Judkin who runs the store, the post-office and the telephone exchange. (They are all under one roof, along with his living quarters, so this doesn't require the ubiquitousness that would seem to be implied.) This nomination was routine. Cedric has been moderator since the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. This year he dealt precedent a mortal blow.

"Nope, I can't do it," he announced from the stove that he was stoking. "I'd like to, but my mother-in-law is sick,

of us, they wore flannel shirts, sheepskins, and corduroys. Half-way between, a group of farmers exchanged views on politics, crops, and the price of grain, while over in a corner the ribald lumberjack element swapped dirty stories and lent color to the scene with their bright mackinaws and high boots. The game warden, tough and trim in his blue uniform, came in and sat down beside our leading poacher. The one had had the other thrown into jail the preceding fall, over a little matter of an untagged deer, but that didn't seem to shadow their social relations. The town's oldest citizen, Silas Peasley, from whom Rufus gets his middle name and in whom every one of us took an affectionate pride, held court down one side of the room. We all went up and spoke to him, and we all got together later and sadly agreed that he had failed considerable. Last year, on his eighty-second birthday, he had been able to leap into the air and click his heels three times. It would be a wonder if he could manage twice this year.

When the meeting was called to order, things simmered down. The children went out-doors, the men tip-toed to seats, and the women lowered their voices. In theory, they have a hand in the town government, but unless a really bitter issue is at stake they sacrifice the franchise for speculation as to whether the town's latest marriage was a shot-gun affair or not. The first business on the Warrant was the electing of a moderator, and someone nominated Cedric Judkin, who runs the store, the post-office, and the telephone exchange. (They are all under one roof, along with his living quarters, so this doesn't require the ubiquitousness that would seem to be implied.) This nomination was routine. Cedric has been moderator since the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. This year he dealt precedent a mortal blow.

"Nope, I can't do it," he announced from the stove that he was stoking. "I'd like to, but my mother-in-law is sick,

lars a year, or whether, instead, the town should buy him a star instead of making him furnish his own. One year it had to do with the licensing of a beer parlor. And once—oh, lovely year of which fables are still told and Rabelaisian quips repeated—it was whether or not the town should appropriate money to hire the services of a bull for the convenience of the cow-owning citizens. This year the Article read To see what sum of money the town will grant and raise to purchase or repair snow-removal equipment. Snow removal—"breaking out the roads"—is an impressive item on a Maine town's budget. It costs more than the education of the young

"Mr. Moderator"

"Mr. Hart"

"Look, I been running that damn plow for seven years, ever since we bought her, and she was second-hand then She ain't going to go through another winter She's all tied together with haywire and every time I take her out, something new falls off I'm sick and tired of the whole rig"

"I don't see where Bill's got any kick coming" a voice from the rear proclaimed "He gets paid by the hour, whether he's plowing or tinkering Far as that goes, he was hired with the idea he'd keep her in good shape, and if he ain't done it that's skin off his own nose"

"God A'mighty there's limits to what a man can do with a bunch of junk. If you or any of the rest of your shiftless tribe can do any better—"

"Shiftless! At least my woman makes her own bread, instead of traipsin' up to the store for it like some I know"

"Address the chair!" the moderator shouted

"We need a new plow!"

"We don't! We can send her back to the factory and have them undo the damage Bill's done her."

"*I* done her!" There was more to this speech, but no

fished it out and pocketed it, a flagrantly illegal act condoned by everyone present on the premise that there warn't no need to hurt his feelings. It was a close matter, but the new plow won.

A weather-beaten man with a rather fine and intelligent face, who had been figuring feverishly on the back of an old envelope, rose to his feet "Mr. Moderator, we hadn't ought to do this. It's going to raise taxes sixty percent. I got the figures right here. We'd ought to do a little more considering before we act."

There was a stunned silence, and then a roar. The moderator pounded frantically, and then cut loose with a bellow. "There ain't no use losing our tempers now," he pointed out, demonstrating the derivation of his title. "We voted the money, and it's too late to change our minds."

"Why is it, if we want to?" demanded some untamed spirit.

"I don't know But seems like it's against the rules."

"Where's Cedric at? Get Cedric"

Cedric had gone over to his store but when the summons went out he came splashing across in the March mud and slush with his coat-tails flying. His bearing was rather that of a mother whose better judgment had been telling her all along that she shouldn't have left the children alone with the buzz-saw

"I don't recall anything about that in the rules," he said when the problem had been put to him "But I don't see why we can't rig it up How many want to back water?"

The walls bulged.

"All right If someone will put it in the form of a motion, just so's it'll be legal—"

The haste with which the matter was put through was indecent Then the conservative sum of two hundred dollars was voted to repair the old plow, and the fighting Article was history.

would be a good idea to skip the Poor Account this year, and let it feed off its hump, so to speak.

The first selectman was doubtful. "I dunno 'Course, we never do spend it all, but still, it's good to have a back-log, *case of emergency. We could cut down, say, to two* hundred—"

This was the year when Relief money was running out all over the country, and when food riots were common in the big cities, but that's what we did, all the same. And that doesn't prove, either, that New England didn't feel the depression What it proves is that rural New England, with its starved farms and hand-to-mouth living, is chronically so near depression that a big slump doesn't matter much. It simply mean pulling in the belt another notch, wearing the same clothes one or two or three more years, and going without butter. We don't get guns for our butter, either. We get something even more necessary to the safe-guarding of Democracy. We get self-respect and the right to spit in anyone's eye and tell them to go climb a tree.

And that about covers Town Meeting. Ralph goes every year, since he considers it his duty as a citizen. His sense of responsibility doesn't carry him to the point of taking office, though. It was suggested to him one year that he'd be a good Health Officer. He didn't see why, until his one very special qualification was pointed out to him. He lives a long way from the village. "No one wants the job," they said earnestly. "You're in trouble all the time. Folks get mad if you light into them about the way their out-houses smell, or where they dump their tin cans Next thing, you may find the air let out of your tires, or a hole in your boat. Now living way off up there, you could come in every so often and raise hell, and then go back to the woods till it sort of blew over—".

P S He didn't take the job.

a woman on the dam the other day. She was sitting in the sun, knitting, while her husband fished. If I had met her at a tea, she would have been wearing a rather dowdy beige lace, a harassed expression, and an unbecoming hat, and we would never have got beyond "How do you do?" because I would have been feeling inadequate and lacking in chic, too. As it was, we covered everything, finally getting around to methods of coping with insomnia

I'm not an expert, being the kind that seldom remembers hitting the bed, but I advanced my formula. Lying awake in the dark, I plan a trip. It's usually to the West Indies. I start at the very beginning and go shopping. I buy everything, from toothpaste to the exclusive little model that's going to knock them dead at the captain's dinner. Then I buy the very smartest luggage and pack. In theory I also conjure up all the people I meet on the boat, and what we do and say to each other Actually I have yet to stay awake long enough to get myself aboard.

Her method promises even more entertainment. She starts from the present and moves backward in time, remembering every dress she ever owned and the most important thing that happened to her while she was wearing each one She says a lot of things come back to her that she had *completely* forgotten.

I can believe it I gave the idea a trial spin while I was washing dishes I remembered dresses I wouldn't be found dead in now That black evening gown of 1930, for instance, with a hemline above my knees in front and down to the floor in back, forming a sort of show-case for my legs, which were modishly clad in very light stockings. (Why some of my friends didn't tell me?!) I broke my ankle while wearing that dress, which probably served me right

Then there was a dress—about the only one I can still contemplate without writhing—made of men's heavy silk

Pete and Ira Brown and I had a lot of fun with a whole porchful of sports one evening. Pete and Ira are two old guides, friends of mine. They were sitting outside the hotel with a dozen fishermen when Ralph and I arrived for the mail.

Pete said, "Hi, Louise. Been to B Pond lately?"

I said, "Yup. Gerrish and I went over Saturday."

"Catch any fish?"

"Nope. I don't think there are any fish over there."

Ira stated flatly, "You don't fish in the right place. There are plenty of fish there."

"Well, I fished everywhere, so I must have been in the right place part of the time."

Ira squinted at me through a cloud of cigarette smoke. His eye had a warning gleam. "Bet you didn't fish under the island."

The silence on the porch was electric. Every eye was turned out over the lake, but every ear was cocked in our direction. I had to play this right.

"Why, no," I said uncertainly. "I forgot all about under the island."

Ira looked relieved. "That's where the fish are, this time of year. In them caverns. Last time I was over, I camped overnight on the island. Couldn't hardly get a wink of sleep from the racket they was making, feeding off the roots of the grass. You try there next time."

I couldn't take it any longer. I couldn't stand the bland expressions on the Brown brothers' faces, and the puzzled credulity on the sports'. I said hastily, "Thanks, I will," and went inside.

I love some of the sports. I used to love old Dr. Aldrich, who came up yearly to fish and play poker. He liked to fish, but he also liked his comfort. There's nothing very cozy about sitting on a hard cold rock, surrounded by a cloud of black flies and mosquitoes, so Dr. Aldrich didn't

lower a gate in the dam. And the river, while actually not navigable, is so nearly so that there is always the sporting hope that by some combination of luck and skill someone might get through in a canoe. Most of the races are not canoe races, though. They are run in fold-boats, which are exactly what the name suggests—light little collapsible boats built like kayaks. The frames are made of short pieces of wood with metal sockets on the ends and can be fitted together into the skeleton of a boat. Over this is drawn a rubberized canvas cover, which comes up over the bow and stern, leaving a cock-pit for the operator, who sits flat on the bottom, on a couple of slats, and wields a double-bladed paddle. A rubber apron buttons tight about his waist. With this apron it is almost impossible to swamp the boat. It draws so little water that it can slide over submerged ledges, and the construction is so flexible that it bounces off rocks instead of cracking up on them. So it is comparatively easy to run the river in a fold-boat. But only comparatively, you understand. I don't want to try.

What fascinates me is not the races themselves, although they are exciting, what with spills, hair-breadth escapes, and near-drownings. The real interest lies for me in what I will call the White Water Crowd. Travis Hoke, a friend of ours, is always talking about the various crowds—the Wedding Crowd, for example, college classmates who make a life work of attending each other's weddings, and whose conversation is filled with references of how Stinko dear old Pinko got at Blinko's bachelor dinner. Or the Doggy Crowd, with their dead-serious discussions of that little bitch of the Squires', Faux Pas, by Social Climber out of Emily Post.

Me, I adore the White Water Crowd. All day long they slide down the river in their little boats, looking grim and desperate, and stagger back to Coburn's battered and exhausted to start all over again. They talk about haystacks

"Pussy? Oh, Pussy's out on the Great Snake in Idaho, trying to make a record. Heart-broken not to be here, of course, but when this thing came up—"

"Ooooh, look! Ace, there's you. Look, Ace! I told you you were putting too much beef in your back-water. See what I mean now? See how your bow weaves and— *Oh!* Hey, can't we have that run over again? I want to show Ace—"

It all adds up to lunacy. And the lovely lunatic pay-off is that they do all this for a little bronze medal with a picture of a man in a fold-boat on the front and the date, place and occasion engraved on the back, and I, who never wet a foot or scraped a knee, I, with my wrong attitude, get one, too. I get one because Ralph was helpful about carrying them and their boats repeatedly from the finish back to the start in his cars. So when the Presentation of Medals came along, and they had one left over, they gave it to him ceremoniously to show their appreciation, which was very nice of them. And he came home to where I was sitting and reading and pitched it into my lap, saying, "Here, Mama. Here's something to add to that charm bracelet you've been claiming you're going to collect." Rubies wouldn't have pleased me more. I like a dash of irony in my dish.

So after all, why should we bother to go Outside? There would be only one reason, to see our friends, and our friends come here instead. We have swell friends, as I suppose everyone has, and we'd much rather see them here, undiluted by people we don't like, than Outside. So if they are willing to put up with my off-hand meals for the sake of lounging around in their oldest clothes and being free to do and say what they please; if they are willing to swap their own good beds for our not-so-good ones plus a lot of excellent scenery and fishing, if they want to take the long, involved trip in with nothing much at the

"Pussy? Oh, Pussy's out on the Great Snake in Idaho, trying to make a record. Heart-broken not to be here, of course, but when this thing came up—"

"Ooooh, look! Ace, there's you. Look, Ace! I told you you were putting too much beef in your back-water. See what I mean now? See how your bow weaves and— Oh! Hey, can't we have that run over again? I want to show Ace—"

It all adds up to lunacy. And the lovely lunatic pay-off is that they do all this for a little bronze medal with a picture of a man in a fold-boat on the front and the date, place and occasion engraved on the back, and I, who never wet a foot or scraped a knee, I, with my wrong attitude, get one, too. I get one because Ralph was helpful about carrying them and their boats repeatedly from the finish back to the start in his cars. So when the Presentation of Medals came along and they had one left over, they gave it to him ceremoniously, to show their appreciation, which was very nice of them. And he came home to where I was sitting and reading and pitched it into my lap saying, "Here Mama. Here's something to add to that charm bracelet you've been claiming you're going to collect." Rubies wouldn't have pleased me more. I like a dash of irony in my dish.

So after all why should we bother to go Outside? There would be only one reason, to see our friends, and our friends come here instead. We have swell friends, as I suppose everyone has and we'd much rather see them here undiluted by people we don't like, than Outside. So if they are willing to put up with my off-hand meals for the sake of lounging around in their oldest clothes and being free to do and say what they please, if they are willing to swap their own good beds for our not-so-good ones plus a lot of excellent scenery and fishing, if they want to take the long, involved trip in with nothing much at the

ence, and the butter is unattractively liquid, and the lettuce has wilted, and the tomato aspic that I made this morning isn't going to set. I think of tall, frosted glasses, and salads that are crisp and noisy under the fork, and lemon sherbet, and decide I'd swap the whole north woods for one properly refrigerated meal.

I ask it when Rufus, all snowy and rosy, comes in from a day with his lumberjack pals and croons lovingly, "Mummy nice old son of a bitch." I ask it when I've got the lunch dishes done and the kitchen tidy and am all set for an hour's leisurely reading before going swimming, and a whole hungry gang drops in. Anywhere else, we could drive to the nearest hot-dog stand, but here I have to start from scratch and throw together another complete meal. I ask it when I look at the hands of Coburn's women guests and then at my own, with their short nails, calloused palms, and the burns from the oven door across the backs. The answer is always "No. It's not worth it."

You can't very well stop operations to ponder the problem of worth-whileness when you have a big salmon on the end of a light line. When the reel starts screaming and the rod bends into a vibrating bow and you suddenly remember that you meant to change that frayed leader and didn't, you have enough to think about. The fish starts away from the boat, and you burn your thumb braking the line. Then the water explodes fifty feet away, and you see him, a furious arc in the air, shaking his head viciously in an effort to dislodge the fly. He's a whale! He's easily the biggest fish that— He starts for the boat, and you reel in frantically. The sun is in your eyes, and the landing net is just out of reach—not that you'll ever bring him to the net, your arms are numb already—and then, abruptly, there he is, right up under the gunwale, just as tired as you are. You find that you can reach the net after all, and

once, and the butter is unattractively liquid, and the lettuce has wilted, and the tomato aspic that I made this morning isn't going to set. I think of tall, frosted glasses and salads that are crisp and noisy under the fork, and lemon sherbet, and decide I'd swap the whole north woods for one properly refrigerated meal.

I ask it when Rufus, all snows and ross, comes in from a day with his lumberjack pals and croons lovingly, "Mummy nice old son of a bitch" I ask it when I've got the lunch dishes done and the kitchen tidy and am all set for an hour's leisurely reading before going swimming, and a whole hungry gang drops in Anywhere else, we could drive to the nearest hot-dog stand, but here I have to start from scratch and throw together another complete meal I ask it when I look at the hands of Coburn's women guests and then at my own, with their short nails, calloused palms, and the burns from the oven door across the backs The answer is always "No It's not worth it."

You can't very well stop operations to ponder the problem of worth-whileness when you have a big salmon on the end of a light line When the reel starts screaming and the rod bends into a vibrating bow and you suddenly remember that you meant to change that frayed leader and didn't you have enough to think about The fish starts away from the boat, and you burn your thumb braking the line Then the water explodes fifty feet away and you see him a furious arc in the air, shaking his head angrily in an effort to dislodge the fly He's a whale! He's easily the biggest fish that— He starts for the boat, and you reel in frantically The sun is in your eyes and the landing net is just out of reach—not that you'll ever bring him to the net, your arms are numb already—and then, abruptly, there he is right up under the gunwale, just as tired as you are You find that you can reach the net after all, and

to soul searching I find. Revolt and reform, whether private or general, are always bred in misery and discontent. So now, sitting here quietly with nothing to annoy me and nothing to exhilarate me—except that I am at long last on the final chapter of this book I undertook so light-heartedly to write—I will once and for all try to find the answer.

Why did we come to live here in the first place? We thought it was because we liked the woods, because we wanted to find a simple, leisurely way of life. Now, looking back, I think that we were unconsciously seeking to find a lost sense of our own identity. Looking back through the telescope of the last six years, I can see myself as I was and realize how living here has changed me. I hope it has changed me for the better. Certainly I am happier than I was then. Certainly I am more at home in this world that we have created than ever I was in that vast and confusing maelstrom that we call civilization.

Here I dare to be myself I don't see why it should ever again be important to me what I wear, or whether I have read the latest book or seen the latest play, or know the newest catch word. I don't see why I should ever care again what people think of me. It seems silly now, but those things were once important. I don't see why it should ever matter to me again who does or does not invite me to her house, who does or does not speak to me, who does or does not have more money than I have. Those things used to matter, though, because I had no identity of my own. I had nothing to go by but the standards someone else had set up. To define freedom, for which men and women and children are dying all over the world, in terms of indifference to clothes and social contacts and popular attitudes seems so trivial and irresponsible a thing to do that I am ashamed of it, as of a gross impertinence; but that is what living here adds up to, for me. I am free.

yes, adds up to more than that All ordinary people like

to soul searching, I find Revolt and reform, whether private or general, are always bred in misery and discontent. So now, sitting here quietly with nothing to annoy me and nothing to exhilarate me—except that I am at long last on the final chapter of this book I undertook so light-heartedly to write—I will once and for all try to find the answer.

Why did we come to live here in the first place? We thought it was because we liked the woods, because we wanted to find a simple, leisurely way of life. Now, looking back, I think that we were unconsciously seeking to find a lost sense of our own identity. Looking back through the telescope of the last six years, I can see myself as I was and realize how living here has changed me. I hope it has changed me for the better. Certainly I am happier than I was then. Certainly I am more at home in this world that we have created than ever I was in that vast and confusing maelstrom that we call civilization.

Here I dare to be myself. I don't see why it should ever again be important to me what I wear, or whether I have read the latest book or seen the latest play or know the newest catch word. I don't see why I should ever care again what people think of me. It seems silly now, but those things were once important. I don't see why it should ever matter to me again who does or does not invite me to her house, who does or does not speak to me, who does or does not have more money than I have. Those things used to matter, though, because I had no identity of my own. I had nothing to go by but the standards someone else had set up. To define freedom, for which men and women and children are dying all over the world, in terms of indifference to clothes and social contacts and popular attitudes seems so trivial and irresponsible a thing to do that I am ashamed of it, as of a gross impertinence; but that is what living here adds up to, for me. I am free.

It adds up to more than that. All ordinary people like

or commented upon. I could, quite literally, kill anyone who says to me, "A penny for your thoughts" I'm a New Englander, so I can't talk about love. The only way I can explain why I never feel like killing Ralph is open to unflattering misinterpretation; but I'll try to explain, all the same

Emily Dickinson once said of a little niece who had been shut up in a closet as punishment, and was discovered there hours later, perfectly composed and happy, "But no one could ever punish a Dickinson by shutting her up alone!" That applied to Emily herself, and it applies to this obscure Dickinson. It applies to my ability to be contented here, away from the world, and to the truth underlying Ralph's and my relationship: that being with Ralph is just exactly as good as being alone.

Now that that's written, it looks terrible, and I meant it to be the nicest thing I could say!

And what about Ralph himself? Does he feel as I feel about our life here? I can't answer for him No one can truly answer for another person's thoughts and feelings. I can go only by what external evidence I have

Last summer a visitor, Barbara Wing, asked Ralph a purely hypothetical question, during one of those long rambling discussions that kindred souls get into: "If you had a million dollars left you tomorrow, what would be the first thing you'd do?"

Ralph thought for a long time, and I thought right along with him, wondering whether it would be an island in the South Seas—this was before Pearl Harbor—or a ranch in the Argentine Finally he said slowly, "Well—that's a hard question to answer I can't make up my mind whether a bathroom or a new roof for the woodshed comes first." He was serious, so we all laughed; but I don't worry any more about whether he really likes it here as much as I do.

I'd spend my million dollars on Forest Lodge, too, ex-